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The Development Of A Consensus Model To Select, Establish And Implement Minimal Competencies In California Unified School Districts

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CONSENSUS MODEL TO SELECT, ESTABLISH AND IMPLEMENT MINIMAL COMPETENCIES IN CALIFORNIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICTS

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Abstract of Dissertation

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study was to provide a model for California unified school districts to establish minimal competencies and to provide added direction, guidance and support to those districts that had already adopted them. The model was based on a consensus of selected unified school districts throughout California. It sought to establish a step-by-step process which any school district could follow. To accomplish this purpose, the following objectives were addressed:

1. To specify minimum competencies in identified curriculum areas
2. To ascertain who will recommend to the Board of Education the minimum acceptable levels of student performances and how the levels will be established
3. To create a manageable measurement scheme consistent with the adopted competencies
4. To determine the disposition of students who do not attain acceptable competency levels

PROCEDURE: This study was descriptive and employed the interview as the primary data-gathering technique. The procedures employed in conducting this study were the following: (1) a review of the relevant literature to identify procedures in establishing minimal competencies; (2) the construction of an interview instrument to gather specific information on how minimum competencies in curriculum areas could be identified and to ascertain the most beneficial methods of implementing minimal competencies; (3) the selection of twelve unified school districts in California for interviews; (4) the administration of the interview; (5) the tabulation and treatment of the data; and (6) the development of a model which could assist districts in the implementation and identification of minimal competencies.

FINDINGS: In the selection of committee personnel the general agreement among the interviewees was that the main working committee consisted of teacher representatives and the Director of Curriculum. When choosing committee

members, the principals from each school chose the members to serve. In choosing the chairman of the committee, the general agreement was that the chairman was selected by the superintendent of the district. In dividing committee members into subcommittees, the consensus was that the main committee divided into subcommittees at the beginning of each meeting and met later as the main committee. At least one year is needed to do an effective job in selecting minimal competencies. When asked if community members were given an opportunity to express their opinions, the consensus was that parents were given a chance to express their opinions after the competencies had been selected by the main committee. Parents were mostly concerned over whether standards were set high enough. When asked which competencies students had to pass in order to graduate, the consensus was that students must exhibit competencies in reading, writing and computation. In establishing criteria for passing the reading competencies, the consensus was that students must demonstrate knowledge in four different categories. When asked how districts actually selected competencies, interviewees replied that the main committee met first, selected competencies and then gave the list to the parent committee for comments and revisions. The main committee had a second opportunity to change the competencies after they had been reviewed by the parent committee and then submitted the final list to the board for approval. In establishing criteria for passing the math competencies, students had to demonstrate knowledge in ten different main categories. In discussing the criteria for passing the writing competencies, the student had to demonstrate knowledge of spelling, capitalization, punctuation and grammar as well as show he could write a logical composition. He had to stick to the main point, use examples and show logical thinking.

Measurement Instruments: When asked what measurement instruments would be used to measure students in reading, districts indicated they would be using teacher selected materials such as newspapers, magazine articles and paragraphs written by teachers. In math, test items would be constructed by teachers. In writing, test items would also be constructed by teachers as well as kinds of compositions to be written by the students.

Rationale for Selection: In choosing the rationale for selecting measurement instruments in reading, writing and computation, the consensus was that students ought to be able to read certain forms, compute certain figures and write with certain skills in order to get along in life after graduation.

Implementation of Competencies: All interviewees replied that inservice workshops concerning implementing the

competencies were held during the year. The main point all districts stressed was that teachers and staff had known about minimal competencies from the time committees first started working on them. Staff members were informed, through representatives, on the progress of the committee and were allowed to make suggestions and revisions throughout the year.

Student Remediation Procedures: All districts replied that arrangements would be made for a conference to take place between the teacher, parent, student and counselor when a student had shown he could not pass the competencies. At the conference it would be decided how many periods a day the student would be attending a competency lab and which remediation materials he would be needing in order to pass specific competencies. Competency Labs had been established at every high school. These labs were for the purpose of helping all students who had failed parts of the competency test. Most students would be attending the competency lab at least one full period a day. Differential standards would be used when testing students who had been identified as Learning Disabled. All districts replied that there would be no differential standards for students of limited English speaking ability and that all students would take the competency test in English. Special help would be given to handicapped students in order for them to take the regular competency test along with the other students.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Further models should be developed after minimal competency testing is actually implemented in the schools. Specific attention should be given to the following questions: (1) Since the tests have been given, have minimal competency standards been raised or lowered? (2) Since the tests have been given, what revisions have been made in each of the three main competencies? (3) Since the tests have been given, what have school districts done to check their revised tests for reliability and validity? (4) How many students in the various school districts actually failed the tests? (5) How effective have the competency labs been for remedial students? (6) What percentage of limited English speaking students have failed the test? (7) If there has been a large percentage of limited English speaking students failing the test, what does the district intend to do about it? (8) Has the legality of minimal-competency testing been challenged in the courts by various parents of students failing the tests? If so what have been the results? (9) Have minimal competency tests made any difference in the attitude of taxpayers in the community? and (10) Have minimal competency tests made any difference in the attitude of teachers (in the way teachers teach)?

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In the 1976 Gallup Poll of the public's attitude toward the public schools, the most popular suggestion, by far, was "Devote more attention to the basic skills." Elam stated that these findings were obviously further evidence of a nationwide shift toward more traditional values in every field.[1] The public was now demanding stricter rules in dealing with the behavior of the young and, more specifically, higher standards in the public schools.

The public's attitude toward basic skills in the schools and its negative reactions toward public education, in general, is not a new phenomenon. Stull asserted that there has been, for a number of years, an increasing public inclination to remove the mystique from education. The attitude of complete faith in the schools changed to one of skepticism. At the core of the American dream was the strong belief that education was the key to the good life. The American people began to feel their dream was being threatened. Rapidly rising taxes and parent dissatisfaction with student achievement were the main influences that

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[1]Stanley M. Elam, "Nostalgia's Child: Back to Basics," Phi Delta Kappan, 58 (March, 1977), 521-23.

generated the volatile situation that began to develop. Americans, everywhere, insisted that accountability be increased in the schools.[2]

The public's negative attitude, Stull stated, actually began building ever since the Russian launching of Suptnik in 1957, which triggered a thorough look at public education all over the United States.[3] Almost concurrent with the upheaval came the hue and cry over "Why Can't Johnny Read?" Increasing attention, claimed Dunn, began being focused on the many students who, even though were awarded high school diplomas, could not obtain jobs because they lacked basic skills.[4]

As part of the general reappraisal, people began to wonder why, after twelve years and a high school diploma, college time had to be spent learning the fundamentals of the English language and basic computational skills. Along with the accountability movement came the strong belief that the high school diploma should actually mean that the student had mastered certain minimal competencies during his time in school.

In 1973, a case was introduced in the San Francisco Superior Court by a recent high school graduate who sued

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[2]Speech given by Senator John Stull in an address to educators ("Implications of the Stull Bill") at the Association for California School Administrators Conference in Pasadena, September, 1975.

[3]Ibid., p. 3.

[4]Kenneth Dunn, "Educational Accountability in Our Schools," Momentum, 33 (October, 1977), 10-16.

the San Francisco School District for negligence and fraud.[5] Peter Doe, as the plaintiff was designated in the case, had been graduated from a San Francisco high school, despite the fact that he was unable to read at a sixth grade level. The school district gave Peter Doe a diploma ostensibly attesting to the fact that he had achieved a level suitable to be graduated from high school.

While the case failed in court, Strike claimed it succeeded in the public forum. Principals, superintendents and school boards throughout the country began to wonder just how many more Peter Does were in the schools. Indeed, Strike further indicated, the public began to feel that it signified little more than twelve years of reasonably faithful and nonbelligerent attendance. As a result of the response to an increasing confusion and impatience on the part of the American public, legislatures, state boards of education and local school boards began reviving policies that required prespecified competencies be demonstrated before promotion or graduation occurred.[6]

Statement of the Problem

The requirement that districts come up with measurable proficiency standards, according to

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[5]Gary Saretsky, "The Strangely Significant Case of Peter Doe," Phi Delta Kappan, 54 (May, 1973), 89-92.

[6]Kenneth Strike, "What Is a Competent High School Graduate?" Educational Leadership, 35 (November, 1977), 93-97.

Gordon,[7] appeared to be the most far-reaching of the changes embodied by the Hart Bill.[8] In essence, the new law obliged districts to spell out clearly a plan to develop just what competencies would be accepted as minimum essentials for high school graduation. In view of the large numbers of high school students who would have to be individually assessed with respect to a district's adopted standards, it was certain that the district's assessment procedures could not be so elaborate and/or costly that they could not be administered efficiently. Creating such an assessment system presented districts with a genuine challenge.

In brief, the local district had to (1) identify, but not necessarily limit itself to, minimum competencies in communication and computation, (2) decide on the minimum acceptable levels of student performance in those competencies, and (3) create a manageable measurement process consistent with the competencies. If a district wanted to be sure that its curriculum emphases were going to be reflected in its adopted performance standards, local standard setting and test development would have to take place. One of the major problems facing California school districts concerning minimal competencies was one of

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[7]David Gordon, "Minimum Competencies: Trends and Issues," Handbook of Minimal Competencies, ed. Richard Bossone (California State Department of Education Program, Evaluation and Research, 1977), 3-4.

[8]Hart Act, Chap. 856, 1 Cal. Stats. 1956 (1976).

establishing the requirements within the prescribed time frame indicated by the Hart Bill, which was by 1980. A district, in the process of implementing that law, faced considerable logistical and organizational problems.

Furthermore, there were some difficult questions for districts to answer. What exactly constituted a minimum level of competency? How much did a student need to master? How many competencies were enough? In order for school districts to meet the schedule of implementation, a working model was needed, based on related literature, information from the California State Department of Education and firsthand experience of school districts that had been on minimum competencies for several years prior to passage of the Hart Bill.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to provide a consensus model for California unified school districts to establish minimal competencies and to provide added direction, guidance and support to those districts that had already adopted them. The model was based on a consensus of selected unified school districts throughout California. It sought to establish a step-by-step process which any school district could follow. To accomplish this purpose, the following objectives were addressed:

1. To specify minimum competencies in identified curriculum areas.

2. To ascertain who will recommend to the Board of Education the minimum acceptable levels of student performances and how the levels will be established.

3. To create a manageable measurement scheme consistent with the adopted competencies.

4. To determine the disposition of students who do not attain acceptable competency levels.

Rationale for the Study

Gordon emphasized that the California Department of Education, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education considered the Hart Bill to be of great significance to the students and to the citizens of California.[9] Riles, concurring with Gordon, stated that if the bill were implemented well, it could be of great benefit to all the students of the state. If it were implemented poorly, however, Riles felt it could do great damage to the aspirations of students and to education, in general, in California.[10]

The requirements of the Hart Bill will have far-reaching implications for curriculum, counseling and assessment processes in each local district. The implementation of the bill was primarly a local responsibility,

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[9]Gordon, op. cit., p. 6.

[10]Wilson Riles, "Minimum Competencies: Trends and Issues," Handbook of Minimal Competencies, ed. Richard Bossone (California State Department of Education Program Evaluation and Research, 1977), p. 2.

with guidance coming from the State Department. Because of this, the Hart Bill offered a challenge to each local district to foster a consensus in the community about what basic skills were, which basic skills were important and the levels at which standards of basic skills had to be set. Those tasks, in light of the rigid time schedules imposed by the bill, were difficult to achieve. This study may assist each district in implementing the requirements of the Hart Bill with a minimum of conflicts and serious problems.

Methodology of the Study

This study was descriptive and employed the interview as the primary data-gathering technique. The procedures employed in conducting this study were the following: (1) a review of the relevant literature to identify procedures in establishing minimal competencies; (2) the construction of an interview instrument to gather specific information on how minimum competencies in curriculum areas could be identified and to ascertain the most beneficial methods of implementing the Hart Bill; (3) the selection of twelve unified school districts in California for interviews; (4) the administration of the interview; (5) the tabulation and treatment of the data; and (6) the development of a model which could assist districts in the implementation and identification of minimal competencies.

Assumptions

This study was based on several assumptions, which were:

1. There is no acceptable, recognized model for implementing or identifying minimal competencies in California unified school districts.

2. Personnel within a unified school district want to know what other unified school districts throughout California are doing to identify and implement minimal competencies.

3. Proper identification and implementation of minimal competencies do not just happen; they have to be planned.

4. The board of education is the unit primarily responsible for the identification and implementation of minimal competencies but relies heavily on recommendations from the superintendent.

Limitations of the Study

1. This study was limited to selected unified school districts within the state of California. Nonunified school districts were not considered part of this study because of the lack of articulation and control between all types of high school districts and the districts containing the feeder schools. Within unified school districts, there were coordinated programs which enabled the researcher to ascertain which minimal competencies were being identified

and if they were impinging on all grades. The researcher was especially interested to learn the extent of identification and implementation within the selected districts.

2. The researcher had no way of assuring that the information would be complete, save his professional judgement and that of his dissertation committee.

3. While care was taken that the responses in the interview would be adequate to construct a model, the interviewer did not have control over the perceptions of those interviewed.

4. While the researcher constructed a model, the study was not designed to test the applicability of the model.

5. It should be noted that the data provided a consensus model through the collective procedures and opinions of the surveyed school districts; hence the model is descriptive of what was being done in the surveyed district and should not be construed as prescriptive for other school districts.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms were defined:

Accountability refers to the demand by the American public that educators be held accountable for the amount of

learning they produce.[11] It is the process by which teachers, supervisors and administrators are held responsible for the improvement or lack of improvement in the performance of students.[12]

Basic Skills are the fundamental skills commonly taught in schools without which one could not function effectively in everyday life. Such skills would include the ability to read, write, speak, do simple arithmetic, spell correctly, write properly and to use a dictionary.[13]

Competencies refer to the possession of well-defined skills, knowledge and understanding as measured by a level of performance on a test instrument.

Competency-Based Education is based upon the belief that learning is demonstrated through changes in the behavior of learners and that teaching is aimed at facilitating these changes. It reflects the principle that individuals attain similar objectives at different rates. It gives credence to the assertion that educators should be accountable for their students' learning. It is based upon the use of continuous evaluation as feedback for

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[11]Robert F. Biehler, Psychology Applied to Teaching (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), pp. 7-8.

[12]James Lewis, Jr., School Management by Objectives (New York: Parker Publishing Company, 1974), p. 41.

[13]Edgar H. Schuster, "Back to Basics: What Does It Really Mean?" Clearing House 59 (February, 1977), 237-39.

making revisions in the instructional program.[14]

Goals are broad statements of purpose, general statements of anticipated learning on the part of the student. Goals provide the teacher with a general sense of direction. They are rough indicators of where instruction is taking the student.[15]

A model is an abstract representation of phenomena.[16] A model is a simplified or familiar structure which is used to gain insight into phenomena that scientists want to explain.[17] The term is synonymous with the word paradigm--it is a representation of reality, a symbolic approximation of the real situation more akin to an image, a symbol or an analogy than to an aerial photograph.[18]

Performance Indicators are precise descriptions of how the competency can be demonstrated.[19]

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[14]James Eisele, "Assumptions Underlying Competency Based Education," Thrust for Educational Leadership, 5 (November, 1975), 33.

[15]Peter F. Oliva, Supervision for Today's Schools (New York: Thomas Crowell Publishing Co., 1976), p. 325.

[16]Gilbert Sax, Empirical Foundations of Educational Research (Englewood-Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Publishing Co., 1968), p. 23.

[17]Deobold Van Dalen, Understanding Educational Research: An Introduction (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., 1973), p. 53.

[18]Stephen J. Knezevich, Administration of Public Education (3d ed.; New York: Harper and Row Publishing Co., 1975), p. 525.

[19]Keith A. Acheson, "Developing Competency Based Graduation Requirements--Tips and Guidelines," Thrust for Educational Leadership, 5 (November, 1975), 10-12.

Proficiency refers to a level of achievement by which students integrate information and perform tasks with facility and expertise. The measure of performance is a subjective judgment by recognized professionals.

Standard is a statement or series of statements describing acceptable levels of skills development for identifying pupils as proficient in a particular basic skill.

Summary

In Chapter 1, the problem has been stated and a rationale, purpose and methodology for the study presented. Assumptions, limitations of the research and definitions of terms conclude this portion of the study.

Chapter 2 contains a survey of related literature, outlining previous study in the areas of accountability, basic skills and minimal competencies.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology involved in the study.

Chapter 4 analyzes the results of the interviews and explains the means by which the model was developed.

Chapter 5 presents the refined model for establishing and implementing minimal competencies and concludes the study.

Chapter 2

SURVEY OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter surveys literature related to (1) accountability, (2) basic education, and (3) minimal competencies in education.

Because of public demands, the idea of accountability has taken hold in the classrooms across the nation. As accountability procedures were included in school programs, it became clear to parents that students at the various levels were not meeting reasonable standards of achievement. Specifically, scores in reading, writing and computation were spiralling downward. People began calling for more basic education in the schools. Within a very short period of time, the majority of districts were stressing computation, reading and writing skills and deleting many subjects which had come to be regarded as frills, such as art, music, home economics and shop. To simply stress the basic skills, however, was not sufficient for the general public. There was a need, claimed parents, not only to teach basic skills but also to test them in order to make sure they had been taught properly. As a result of demands made on educators, numerous states began passing minimal competency laws. These laws stated that students had to pass certain reading, writing and

computational skills in order to graduate from high school. Chapter 2 will survey the literature related to the areas of accountability, basic education and minimal competency education.

Accountability

Sciara wrote in 1972 that one of the most rapidly growing and widespread movements in education is educational accountability. He felt it could well become one of the most important educational movements in the decade of the 1970's. Sciara's prediction has come true. Beginning as a flickering spark in the twilight of the 60's and fanned into flame by the federal government, politicians, taxpayers, unhappy parents, as well as private learning corporations, accountability has been transformed from a theoretical notion to a formidable force in American education.[1]

Several leading educators have attempted to define accountability. Sciara claimed accountability meant that schools must prove to the public that students meet certain required standards.[2] Wynne felt accountability meant a system had to be devised which would supply the public with

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[1]Frank Sciara, Accountability in American Education (Boston: Allyn and Bacon Publishing Co., 1972), pp. 1-2.

[2]Ibid., p. 6.

information concerning the student's progress.[3] Mesirow thought it meant that goals are identified and developed by people having the most to do with them--teachers, parents and students.[4] Pratte merely claimed that schools would be improved if they were made accountable for what they did and did not do.[5]

On the surface, these definitions differ significantly from one another. They are not mutually exclusive, however, and all four can be incorporated into a general definition of accountability which would be appropriate for this study: Because of low scores and low achievement by students, the public has come to feel that education, in general, needs to improve. The public, furthermore, feels that the schools must prove that improvement has taken place. In order to do this, a system must be developed, by individual school districts, that will have as its main objective, the supplying of accurate information concerning student performances to the public. To develop such a system, certain goals and priorities would be established by personnel having the most to do with the education

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[3]Edward J. Wynne, The Politics of School Accountability (Berkeley, California: McCutchan Publishing Co., 1072), p. 1.

[4]David S. Mesirow, "Report on the Forum of Educational Accountability," The High School Journal, 60 (February, 1977), 213.

[5]Richard Pratte, "Teacher Accountability: The Need for Perspective," The High School Journal, 60 (February, 1977), 189-203.

process--parents, students and teachers. Methods of evaluation would be devised and utilized at the end of the school year to show that the students have either met certain proposed standards or have not. Students, therefore, would be held accountable to the schools while the schools, on the other hand, would be held accountable to the public.

As the concept of accountability came to the forefront of the educational scene, it began to generate strong appeal to both the general public and to educators alike. Browder explained the appeal and popularity of accountability by reasoning that evaluation of the schools is essential in order to determine if the public is getting what it has paid for.[6] Since so much parent criticism has been leveled at the schools because of low scores and since property owners have shown their displeasure at higher taxes to support education, Browder's point appears well-taken.

Early Origins of Accountability

In order to explain the public's demand for accountability, it is necessary to trace the roots of modern concepts to accountability to an earlier period in

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[6]Lesley H. Browder, Emerging Patterns of Administrative Accountability (Berkeley: McCutchan Publishing Co., 1971), p. 33.

educational history known as the "Efficiency Era."[7] The efficiency era in education began around 1900 and ended about 1925. In explaining this era, Laffey stated:

> It was an age when scientific management offered itself as the panacea for solving all the problems of the schools. Even though scientific management failed in this endeavor, the years and experiences did point out one of the hard realities educators have to face. Schools exist in a cultural context and often the cultural context dictates how the schools operate.[8]

The cultural context of the efficiency era was that of business and industry. Callahan stated that the rise of business and industry to a position of prestige and influence resulted in America's subsequent saturation with business and industrial values and practices.[9] As business and industry's policies and leaders began to exert themselves as major cultural influences, it became apparent that educators and school administrators were in extremely vulnerable positions. Within this cultural setting, the efficiency expert entered the field of education to save the schools from their own inefficiencies.

In 1911, Frederick Taylor, an industrial engineer, began to expound a system of scientific management. Because of his ideas, Taylor became nationally prominent.

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[7]James L. Laffey, Accountability, a Brief History and Analysis (Berkeley: National Council of Teachers of English, 1973), p. 1.

[8]Ibid., p. 4.

[9]Raymond E. Callahan, Education and the Cult of Efficiency (Chicago: University of Chicago Press Publishing Co., 1962), p. 5.

This, in turn, led Taylor to pronounce that his principles had universal applicability. His principles, he maintained, could be applied with equal force to all social activities: to the management of homes, the management of farms, the management of business and the management of schools.[10] Due to Taylor's influence, the remaining years of the second decade of the twentieth century were devoted to criticizing the schools for their inefficiencies and asking why the schools of the United States were not as efficient as business and industrial organizations. Citizens clarified the issues by stating that if they were as efficient as business and industry, then they could provide the public with results that could readily be seen and measured.[11] The response by educators to these critical observations led to the exploratory development of many standardized evaluation forms and tests.

Recent Origins of Accountability

Recent events concerned with education and the schools suggest that political and educational leaders are primarily responsible for the renewed interest in accountability. The accountability movement in public education, claimed Hottleman, received attention in 1970 when President Nixon suggested that school administrators

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[10] Ibid., p. 43.

[11] Ibid., p. 48.

and school teachers should be responsible for their performances and it was in their interest as well as in the interest of the pupils that they be held accountable.[12] Prior to the President's suggestions, Leon Lessinger, former Assistant Commissioner of Education, had written that education, in order to be truly effective, must become accountable to the public. He claimed that schools had failed to educate children.[13] Lessinger insisted that educators should be required to describe and measure the behavior expected of each student upon completion of the program they propose for funding.[14]

In 1974, Biehler wrote that one of the most important current developments of the day in American education was accountability. He referred to accountability as "demands by parents and school board members that teachers and administrators be held responsible for the amount of learning that was produced in the schools."[15] It became increasingly evident that a more precise method of measuring student achievement was needed.

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[12]Girard D. Hottleman, "The Accountability Movement," The Massachusetts Teacher, 53 (January, 1974), 8-13.

[13]Leon Lessinger, Every Kid a Winner: Accountability in Education (New York: Simon and Schuster Publishing Co., 1970), p. 62.

[14]Leon Lessinger, "Performance Proposals for Educational Funding: A New Approach to Federal Resource Allocation," Phi Delta Kappan, 51 (November, 1969), 136-37.

[15]Robert F. Biehler, Psychology Applied to Teaching (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 7-8.

Kimbrough and Nunnery felt that underneath the flood of demands for educational accountability was a deep public disappointment with a basic institution of society. They believed the demands for accountability were based upon the beliefs of many citizens that education had failed them.[16]

Dunn expressed similar thoughts when he stated that public concern has moved from voter unhappiness at school board meetings to taxpayer suits charging educational malpractice. More recently, claimed Dunn, an anti-education attitude has been voiced by legislators submitting bills which reduce funds for education while strengthening accountability laws that would link better school performance to fiscal support. In a series of court actions, primary focus has been on the individual's rights to expect results from education and on a demand for accountability from education personnel.[17]

Educators' Opinions concerning Accountability

While the idea of accountability became increasingly popular with the general public, it was still not entirely accepted by all educational leaders. Taggart doubted that providing accountability in the schools would

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[16]Ralph B. Kimbrough and Michael Nunnery, Educational Administration: An Introduction (New York: Macmillan, 1976), pp. 190-92.

[17]Kenneth Dunn, "Educational Accountability in Our Schools," Momentum, 56 (October, 1977), 10-16.

assure success in life. He wrote:

> Just because a child succeeds in learning the basics, does that mean he will succeed in life? If not, then why bother with specific guaranteed results for narrow objectives which will not make any difference to the student in the long run?[18]

Silberman also had her doubts about the effectiveness of accountability. She warned that, in too many schools, it was getting out of hand. It was taking on a life of its own that tended to strip curriculum down to little more than a drill of reading and math. "Accountability has become a tail that is wagging the dog."[19]

Cox also cautioned educators about becoming overenthusiastic about accountability. He felt it had little value for education. However, if it were implemented into the schools, it would only work, Cox stated, under certain conditions: (1) if the special functions of the schools were clearly identified and agreed upon by parents, teachers and administrators; (2) if the outcomes for which the schools were held accountable were well within their control; (3) if there could be agreement by parents and teachers on what students were expected to learn; and (4) if the standards of quality were made absolutely clear

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[18]Robert Taggart, "Accountability and the American Dream," Educational Forum, 39 (November, 1974), 33-41.

[19]Arlene Silberman, "Accountability--A Horror Story," The Instructor, 87 (November, 1977), 28.

to all students and parents.[20]

On the other hand, many leaders felt that accountability was the only way to save education. Broadbelt felt that the public was ripe for a change and endorsed the idea of accountability. To strengthen his opinion he quoted the Harris Poll, which had indicated the public's discontent with education. Voters have rejected half of all new building programs and, in a recent sampling of 14,000 school superintendents, Broadbelt stated that 97 percent of these administrators were in favor of accountability.[21]

Huber also stated that one of the main reasons for the popularity of the accountability movement was the fact that taxpayers had poured money into the public schools and were given no accounting of what happened to it. The public began to say that, if they were paying for the schools, they wanted results.[22]

Wildavsky also agreed that parents should know what they are paying for when he wrote:

> The request for accountability in the sense of holding the school system responsible for the achievement of children in critical areas is a good one. Consumers of services are entitled to know

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[20]Benjamin C. Cox, "Responsibility, Culpability and the Cult of Accountability in Education," Phi Delta Kappan, 58 (June, 1977), 761-66.

[21]Stanley Broadbelt, "The Impact of Educational Accountability Upon Teachers," The High School Journal, 69 (November, 1972), 55.

[22]Joe Huber, "Accepting Accountability," Clearing House, 48 (May, 1974), 515-18.

> what they are getting. Truth in packaging applies just as much to government as to private industry. Indeed, the field of education may be on the verge of making a contribution to the general evaluation of governmental programs. The ability of ordinary citizens to appraise whether they are getting what they want out of the schools is of critical importance in a system of democratic government. The best way to do this is to set up procedures for accountability.[23]

Although professionals in the field continued to argue over the beneficial and detrimental aspects of accountability, by the mid 1970's it began to be accepted as a proper educational procedure. As the process was implemented into the schools, however, administrators became aware of certain problems that needed solving.

Problems with Accountability

One accountability problem, which was identified earlier in the century and apparently still remains, is that of measurement. Educators in the earlier part of the century recognized the difficulties of measuring educational achievement. One comment made in 1913 seems to be appropriate today:

> If scientific measurement is to be accomplished, we must have units or scales of measurement which will enable us to make measurements which are verifiable by other observers. We may not hope to achieve progress except as such measuring sticks are available or may be derived.[24]

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[23]Aaron Wildavsky, A Program of Accountability (Boston: Allyn and Bacon Publishing Co., 1972), pp. 171-80.

[24]Callahan, op. cit., p. 101.

Farr stated that more recently, there has been a growing dissatisfaction with the technical development of modern standardized tests.[25] Earlier educators saw the need for developing appropriate tests. Modern educators, after having evaluated valid and reliable standardized tests, are calling for new kinds of tests.

Glaser and Nitko suggested that new kinds of tests be developed to measure instructional outcomes. "Tests which are used for making instructional decisions demand special characteristics--characteristics that are different from the mental test model that has been successfully applied in aptitude testing work."[26] They went on to state:

> Special types of criteria need to be developed. Of significance are: (1) the creation of items from stated objectives; (2) the creation of interpretive materials for such tests in terms of test content and criteria for performance as well as references to norms for other test-takers; and (3) the extensive application of test performance to domains of content from which the test items were sampled. In essence, modern educators are calling for criterion-referenced tests which interpret an individual's performance with respect to a defined behavioral criterion and which are not limited to a comparison with the performance of other individuals. In addition, there is a need for other newer methods of measuring student behavior related to the affective domain. Finally, there is a need for personnel education which will

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[25]Roger Farr, Reading: What Can Be Measured? (Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1969), p. 11.

[26]Robert Glaser and Anthony J. Nitko, "Measurement in Learning and Instruction," Educational Measurement, ed. Robert L. Thorndike (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1971), 652.

> prevent misadministration, incorrect scoring, and misinterpretation of test results.[27]

The focus for modern evaluation schemes related to accountability is broader than earlier attempts at accountability. In the 1930's teacher behavior was measured by rating sheets; principal behavior was measured by rating scales. Little information was gathered on more complex aspects of student, teacher, or administrative behavior. Consequently, early efforts at accountability were less than effective. The instruments used to observe and rate teachers and students were neither valid nor reliable.[28] The problem still remains, however, and if accountability is to be effective in the schools, better and more accurate ways to measure and evaluate student progress will have to be found.

Another problem with accountability today concerns involving parents in the educational decision-making process. Educators agree that parents should take a part in making decisions but they disagree on the extent of the involvement. Some administrators think that parents should be used only in an advisory capacity <u>after</u> decisions are made. Others feel parents must have an equal voice along with professionals, in <u>all</u> educational decisions. But no matter how administrators feel, Laffey stated, parents

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[27] Ibid., p. 653.

[28] N. L. Gage, <u>Handbook of Research on Teaching</u> (Chicago: Rand McNally Publishing Co., 1965), p. 14.

definitely want to participate in any decision-making process that affects the school life of their child.[29] Deciding how much parent participation will be one of the many problems administrators will have to solve.

Future of Accountability

The majority of educators are optimistic about the future of accountability and feel it will remain on the educational scene for some time to come. Many problems, however, will remain along with it. In predicting the future of accountability, Sciara wrote that pressing issues in education, such as the large number of students lacking basic educational skills, the failure of compensatory education in urban schools and the unprecedented rate of taxpayer rejection of school tax issues cry out for solutions. Accountability is no panacea for the ills of education, warned Sciara, but it does offer the potential for triggering important educational reform. Declaration of educational priorities will become necessary in order to develop objective criteria for professional account ability. The need to develop performance criteria will necessitate a changed emphasis from how teachers proceed to how learning occurs. Efforts to accomplish this goal signal the necessity for expanding the limited knowledge of the human learning process. The drive to obtain a qualitative measure of educational effort will undoubtedly

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[29]Laffey, op. cit., p. 8.

lead educators to the task of developing more adequate diagnostic tools. As accountability becomes more widespread, concluded Sciara, it carries with it the seeds of promise for energizing needed changes in American education as well.[30]

Finally, in assessing the future of accountability, Morris stated:

> It would be presumptuous to try to predict the possible impact of accountability on public education at this time. There are few certainties in these areas involving human beings. But one thing is certain, Pandora's box has been opened and education will never be the same. The 70's promise to be interesting and challenging years in education and accountability may be the most interesting, challenging, disruptive and, in the end, productive issue of all.[31]

Basic Education

As accountability procedures were initiated into the public schools it became clearer to parents that their children were not meeting standards of achievement as evidenced by decreasing scores on standardized tests. As a result of these low test scores in reading, writing and computation, specifically, people began calling for more basic education.

In describing how the movement began, Down stated:

> The concept of basic education is not really all that new. In fact, however, a group of citizens, in 1956, believing that schools had become

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[30]Sciara, op. cit., p. 385.

[31]John E. Morris, Accountability: Watchword for the 70's (Boston: Allyn and Bacon Publishing Co., 1972), p. 15.

> too much laboratories of socialization and too little centers for learning, invented the term and founded an organization called the Council for Basic Education. Today it has a membership of over 5,000 citizens. Basic education meant more to the Council than simply the three R's. Basic education meant that before students graduated from high school, they should at least be able to read at an eighth grade level, write with accuracy, possess computational skills and have the perspective provided by sound historical knowledge.[32]

While the basic education movement was initiated by the Council for Basic Education, it really did not receive strong support and recognition until a decade later. For a time, Wilhelms maintained, there was a great emphasis on the open school. Then, almost suddenly, across the country, the demand began rising for traditional schooling or conservative alternatives. Basic education became a spreading slogan. People began to say that youngsters were not learning to read and write as well as they had before; the new math had wrecked their computational skills; academic standards were going down.[33]

Perhaps the most dramatic hallmark of the movement, Down generalized, was the interest in the writing of proficiency standards into the high school diploma. Another aspect of the movement was the reevaluation of the curriculum innovation of the late 1960's and early 1970's. In

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[32]Graham A. Down, "Why Basic Education?" The National Elementary Principal, 57 (October, 1977), 28-32.

[33]Fred T. Wilhelms, "What About Basic Standards?" Today's Education, 60 (November-December, 1975), 46-48.

1977 Down claimed:

> It is easier to identify the hallmarks of the basic education movement than to explain the causes. However, without the flow of statistical information on declining test scores that was barraging the public consciousness, it is doubtful whether the basic education movement would have gained such momentum.[34]

More and more educators began to criticize the students for not being able to read, write and compute properly when they entered college. Wellington, in 1977, maintained that the college students of today had lost touch with the language. They had come out of elementary and high school classes not knowing how to multiply. They had come out of elective systems not knowing how to listen to anyone else and not knowing how to take directions. They had come out of the 1960's not able to take the pressure of grading. They had come out of a world of primary and secondary education where personal development was said to be worth more than achievement, where creativity was the highest goal and they were often completely and totally at a loss about how to cope with their work, with their time and with themselves.[35]

Hogan, in adding his criticisms to Wellington's, stated:

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[34]Graham A. Down, "The Future of the Back to Basics Movement," (paper presented at the annual meeting of the National School Boards Association, Houston, Texas, March 26-29, 1977).

[35]James K. Wellington, "American Education: Its Failure and Its Future," Phi Delta Kappan, 58 (March, 1977), 23-25.

> On the Berkeley campus of the University of California, about 50% of the incoming freshmen failed the Subject A Examination, which consists of writing a proper composition. Similar failures have been taking place on campuses throughout the nation.[36]

It became obvious that a change in educational philosophy was needed in order to satisfy increasing demands by parents to stress basic education and to reverse the rate of incompetent graduating students. What was sorely needed in education, Hogan argued were: (1) various programs that were based on doing not just studying peripheral skills; (2) programs that extended, rather than restricted the dimensions of learning; (3) professional commitment to teach the skills of literacy at whatever level they were needed, including the high school level; and (4) responsible literacy testing and testmakers.[37] Handleman recommended, also, to increase the student's grasp of basic skills.[38] Since they have no spokesman, platform or declaration of principles, Brodinski pointed out, educators must fall back on a composite view of what, at various times and places, advocates have demanded: (1) the emphasis should be on reading, writing and arithmetic in the elementary grades; (2) the teacher should take the dominant

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[36]Robert Hogan, "Back to Basics Controversy," Media and Methods, 13 (September, 1976), 17-19.

[37]Ibid., pp. 17-19.

[38]Chester Handleman, "Faculty Members Support 'Back to Basics,'" Community College Review, 4 (Winter, 1977), 42-49.

role in the classroom; (3) the teaching methodology should include drill, homework and testing; (4) all report cards should carry traditional grades; and (5) a promotion from grades and graduation from high schools should be permitted only after mastery of skills and knowledge has been demonstrated through tests.[39]

Not all educational leaders agreed with Brodinski, however. Schuster admitted that school districts needed to offer more substantial intellectual fare to students but, for him, going back to the basics was not really a solution. He felt it would be like taking a step back into the dark ages of education. The old conservative school tradition was not better, claimed Schuster, it was far worse because it required of students an uncritical acceptance of authority. It was insensitive to individual differences and it was, according to Schuster, pedagogically ineffective.[40]

Lemke, also, was not that impressed with the idea of basic education, per se. His main concern was what would happen in the schools as a result of the movement. What the public, including many teachers, meant by the word basics, stated Lemke, is subject to many interpretations,

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[39]Benjamin Brodinski, "Back to Basics: The Movement and Its Meaning," Phi Delta Kappan, 58 (March, 1977), 522-27.

[40]Edgar H. Schuster, "Back to Basics: What Does It Really Mean?" Clearing House, 50 (February, 1977), 237-39.

but the lowest common denominator seemed to be an agreement that three or four abilities are so important as to require their being obtained at almost all costs: the ability to read aloud, the ability to remember facts, the ability to add, subtract, multiply and divide and the ability to write legible, correct paragraphs. But basics, in this context, claimed Lemke, was a misconception. By selecting basics, schools choose what to honor as basic based on local educational biases and issues. Selected basics are emphasized at each grade level to the point of excluding from the school curriculum many contents considered by some citizens as basic. When asking what to consider basic in school, citizens and professionals are tempted to think programmatically and narrowly first. Which courses should be eliminated? Should teachers of reading and writing be encouraged to concentrate almost all their time in skill development? Is the elective program obsolete? Should schools admit that too many responsibilities have been assigned to education? Is art a frill in a society apparently lacking faith in aesthetics? Is science blind to beauty? Such questions, offered Lemke, need careful thought, community discussion and professional care before any definite answers to them are proposed.[41]

Wilhelms, like Schuster, felt that going back to the basics would be like going back to a time in the

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[41]Alan Lemke, "Which Basics?" The Clearing House, September, 1977, pp. 14-16.

nation's history when education was authoritarian, rigid, elite and narrow. Wilhelms suggested that the profession should not be concerned with basic education so much as teachers and administrators should be concerned with respect for students' rights, more open styles of teaching and emphasis on the human. If there has been a temporary fall of computational skills in math, Wilhelms argued that it can be easily remedied.[42] He further stated:

> Education has made great gains in mathematical insight and understanding. It is true the schools have tremendous problems to solve but those problems lie in fitting education to the spirit and needs of the times. There is no sense for educators to retreat into old-style formalistic hammering at a few tool skills, coupled with an authoritarian rigidity of discipline.[43]

While basic education seemed to have its critics, it also had its advocates and they were not just parents or board members. Gradually, as the movement began to take a firm hold in schools across the nation, many educators began to jump on the basic education bandwagon. They seemed to regard basic education as both an opportunity to improve student learning and to rekindle parent interest, support and cooperation as well. Van Til was one of the professionals who saw the basic education movement as an opportunity for educators. What is significant about basic education in the 1970's, claimed Van Til, is that it has an external school thrust; it has emerged from the communities

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[42]Wilhelms, op. cit., pp. 46-48.

[43]Ibid., p. 49.

beyond the four walls of the school buildings. Because of this, the movement may bring with it significant new possibilities for educators--possibilities for dialogue, for openness and for change. "Perhaps," hoped Van Til, "going back to basic education will help create a better future."[44]

Freers, like Van Til, saw basic education as a challenge and an opportunity. Concentration upon the instructional act, stated Freers, making it more potent and effective, will result in greater student learning in all areas of the curriculum. There is a strong evidence that a balanced curriculum, one which provides a variety of applications of basic skills, will result in greater student learning of the basics than teaching them in a void. Basic skills, redefined, is a demand for new skills for students, teachers and administrators, claimed Freers. The new skills center not so much around the three R's as around the enabling skills which help all those involved concentrate more completely upon the learning act.[45] She went on to further state:

> The movement is not a new pendulum swing, but a balancing of the swings of the past 20 years. It can and should combine the best of professional knowledge with the accountability being demanded by the public and the relevance being requested by the students. The movement offers the education profession a chance to honestly examine the purposes

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[44]William Van Til, "Back to Basics--With a Difference," Educational Leadership, 33 (October, 1975) 8-13.

[45]Ann McCallum Freers, "Basic Skills Redefined--What Do Students Need?" Thrust for Educational Leadership, 7 (January, 1978), 7-8.

> of schooling and the procedures which are being used, to provide a new result--a reading, writing and computing student using these skills in a responsible way as a continuing learning process in the future.[46]

Whether the basic education movement is considered going backwards, as some educators have indicated or whether it is to be considered a challenge and opportunity, most leaders agree that it will encourage schools to further define their goals and purposes. Ebel stated that the purpose of the schools is to help students learn. He went on to say that much of what students need to learn is useful verbal knowledge--not facts learned by rote because information is not knowledge. To become knowledge, it must be assimilated and integrated into a coherent structure of concepts and relations. Only then does one understand what he knows. Only then has the student learned useful verbal knowledge. Some feel this is an artificial, superficial kind of knowledge, continued Ebel. But the special excellence of mankind is the ability to produce and use verbal knowledge. It is reasonable to believe that the main task of the school is to develop as much as possible of this kind of excellence in young people. Schools are for learning and what is learned mainly is the kind of verbal knowledge and cognitive ability sampled by tests. Students who do well on tests have a firm grasp of language and ideas, of quantity and calculation; they are well-equipped

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[46]Ibid., p. 9.

to succeed in college, business, industry, a profession, government and the society of mankind in general. Soon education must choose, urged Ebel:

> Do we like what we see going on in the schools and coming out of them? If not, educators must change it. When we do, scores on college admission tests will go back up and public will, once again, have a positive view of education.[47]

Minimal Competencies

As accountability procedures were included in school programs and as it became clear to the public that students were not meeting specific goals and objectives in the basic skills, people began demanding more basic education in the schools. Teaching reading, writing and computational skills, however, was not sufficient for them. There was a need not only to teach basic skills but also to test them in order to make sure they had been taught properly. As a result of demands made on the schools, many states began passing minimal competency laws. These laws stated that students had to pass certain reading, writing and computational skills in order to graduate from high school. Gradually, minimal competency testing became an issue on the educational scene. As a matter of fact, Pipho stated that minimal competency testing for high school graduation and grade-to-grade promotion was one of the most explosive issues on the educational scene today. "Probably

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[47]Robert Ebel, "Declining Scores: An Explanation," Phi Delta Kappan, 58 (December, 1976), 306-10.

no concept in recent years has received such widespread attention, either legislatively or by state board adoption."[48]

Definition of Minimal Competencies

Minimal competencies are basic proficiencies in skills and the knowledge needed to perform successfully in real-life activities. Education for minimal competencies, sometimes known as competency-based education, claimed Bossone, concerns the application of a set of skills, such as reading, writing and computation, to a set of general knowledge areas, such as consumer economics, government and law, occupations and health. The goals of competency-based education, Bossone went on, depend on what is to be emphasized: real-life activities or academic skills. The former choice implies major changes in the school curriculum; the latter choice implies fewer changes. The most widely accepted approach is built upon competencies both in skills and real-life activities, to allow for individuality and options in meeting graduation requirements.[49]

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[48]Chris Pipho, "Minimal Competency Testing: A Look at State Standards," Educational Leadership, 34 (April, 1977), 516-20.

[49]Richard Bossone, "What Everyone Should Know About Minimal Competencies," Proceeding: The National Conference on Minimum Competencies, ed. Richard Bossone (New York: University Center of the City University of New York, 1977), pp. 53-54.

Legislation Enacted or Pending

According to Pipho, at the close of 1976, seven states (California, Colorado, Florida, Maryland, New Jersey, Virginia and Washington) had enacted legislation and another nine states (Arizona, Delaware, Georgia, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Oregon and Vermont) had taken either state board or state department of education action to mandate some form of minimal competency activity. Setting standards for high school graduation or grade-to-grade promotion is the assumed goal of this activity, Pipho continued, but as the issue broadens, the specific thrust in some states does not always include a mandate for testing or required standards for high school graduation.[50] Pipho further observed:

> In looking at enacted legislation and adopted state board rulings, it is difficult to find two states that have taken identical action. Even in Florida and California, where early out competency test ideas were enacted at about the same time, implementation procedures and specifics of the legislation are unique to each state. If action is tied to any trend, it is that many states recognized a similar problem about the same time and then proceeded to take action in their own unique way. States that usually opted for strong centralized approach to an issue have enacted rather prescriptive standards for local districts to meet. States which put more emphasis on local control have tended to pass legislation giving guidelines and responsibility to local boards of education.[51]

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[50] Pipho, op. cit., pp. 7-9.

[51] Ibid., p. 10.

Problems Involved in Minimal Competency Education

Virtually all educators agree that the selection, implementation and measuring of minimal competencies will be an extremely difficult process. There will, indeed, be problems along the way. Anderson stated that the major problems involved time and money--not enough of either. Local school districts and the State Board of Education did not budget enough money to provide for inservice training, professional help or professional visitations. At the same time, complained Anderson, school districts were actually given only one year to completely define and write the goals of the new curriculum. Since the new program often required extensive record-keeping procedures, Anderson claimed that one year was not enough to devise and implement new plans.[52] Anderson went on to summarize that the greatest number of problems occurred with the actual writing and defining of competencies. School personnel were not sufficiently trained in these areas and not enough models existed to be of any help. This lack of models forced districts back on their own resources, which, Anderson felt, was in the long run, valuable. In many instances, school districts found it quite helpful to form consortia to develop programs in conformity with the

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[52]Earl N. Anderson, "Coping With Oregon's New Competency-Based Graduation Requirements--View from a Practitioner," (paper presented at the meeting of the American Education Research Association, Washington, D.C., April, 1975).

state requirements.[53] Anderson's main concern, however, was in the area of finance. He claimed the cost of implementing legislated minimum competency requirements would be too high and therefore financially not feasible. Some of the costs, stated Anderson, would include:

> 1. Set-up cost of legislation--in order for a legislature to promulgate a good set of regulations, it is likely to need hearings data and studies.
> 2. Implementation costs--once a state has passed legislation about minimal competencies, it will need information about the effects of a testing program if it is to make reasonable allocations of resources for implementation.
> 3. Excess burdens from compliance--this includes such items as expansion of the number of administrators needed to manage the program and increased risk of liability resulting from the implementation of regulations.[54]

Lowenstein felt that evaluation will be the biggest problem affecting the success of the minimal competency program. Goals can be selected and curriculum can be constructed but if no practical means are developed for determining how well students have learned, the chances that the curriculum will be accepted on any permanent basis are quite marginal, claimed Lowenstein. The importance of the task of developing valid evaluation techniques should not be underestimated.[55]

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Earl N. Anderson, "The Costs of Legislated Minimum Competency Requirements," Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (May, 1978), 606-08.

[55] Morris R. Lowenstein, "Competency-Based Education--Commitment Is Not Enough," Thrust for Educational Leadership, 5 (November, 1975), 7-9.

With the passing of minimal-testing and competency-based education by numerous state legislatures and the school boards, several educators have questioned the fairness of the program. McClung had several objections. Many of these minimal competency programs, he stated, are being imposed upon students late in their secondary education with little prior notice. Imposition one year before graduation, claimed McClung, means that a student will have spent his first ten or eleven years in the school system without notice or knowledge that passing a competency test would be a condition for acquiring the diploma. The competency test is designed to assure that minimal competency is acquired after twelve years of schooling but students in this situation would not have received notice until their tenth or eleventh year of schooling. Most people, McClung went on, would agree that fairness requires a school curriculum and instruction to be matched in some way with whatever is later measured by the test. The test, however, would be unfair if it measured what the school never taught. While substantial numbers of white middle-class students can meet minimal competency standards, McClung objected that there is some evidence that a disproportionate percentage of black and Hispanic students will be adversely affected by the competency test requirements. McClung concluded by saying there are important questions that need to be answered before minimal competency testing is implemented in the schools. Among

the most difficult to answer are:

> 1. Should the testing program be designed to measure only basic proficiency skills such as reading, writing and computation or should it go beyond this by measuring a student's ability to apply these skills in adult life role activities such as those of a consumer, producer and citizen?
> 2. Should satisfactory performance on the tests be a minimum standard to be used in conjunction with other criteria or should it be the exclusive criteria of satisfactory performance resulting in a high school diploma regardless of age or course credits?[56]

In discussing the problems involved in the minimal-competency education program, Wise claimed it will probably contribute to the growing bureaucratization and centralization of American schools. The logic of minimal competency testing contains an implicit vision of how education and school operate. The school is presumed to operate as a bureaucracy and minimal competency testing is designed to specify the aims that the bureaucracy is to serve. He continued:

> As the state specify aims and the school strives to attain them, the bureaucratic structure at both the state and local levels proliferate. The state requires means to establish and monitor the aims; the school district requires means to implement and evaluate the aims. In the process, the state's role in establishing the aims is greatly strengthened and legitimized. The growing tendency to look to higher levels of government to solve educational programs is reinforced. And the drift to centralization of educational policy making continues.[57]

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[56]Merle S. McClung, "Are Competency Testing Programs Fair?" Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (February, 1978), 387-400.

[57]Arthur E. Wise, "Minimal Competency Testing: Another Case of Hyper-Rationalization," Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (May, 1978), 596-98.

Wise concluded his observations by recommending the following: (1) higher levels of government should be concerned with promoting equality of education opportunity; (2) the establishment of standards and the operation of schools should be the responsibility of the local board of education and its professional staff; and (3) serious research must be done on the problems of poor learning and poor teaching.[58]

Reys, like Wise, felt there would be many problems connected with minimal competency education. He stated that even though no general agreement has been reached on what basic skills are, school districts and states throughout the country are currently engaged in assessing them. Even worse than the attempt to assess basic academic skills, Reys proclaimed, is the mounting pressure to develop tests of competence in real-life situations. The development of such a test rests on the fallacious assumption that there exists a well-defined set of basic skills that every citizen needs in order to function effectively in society. This is not correct, maintained Reys. Everyone has different levels of skills and competencies. It must be made perfectly clear to the public that good teaching, not the establishment of a test of minimal competencies, is the key to the achievement of better performance in school.[59]

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[58]Ibid., p. 598.

[59]Robert E. Reys, "Stop, Look, Think! Tests of Minimal Competencies," Arithmetic Teacher, 25 (October, 1977), 8-9.

Mecklenburger questioned the whole idea of minimal competency testing. He called it a bad penny and claimed that it has turned up again. Sooner or later, he felt, the bad penny will have to be taken out of circulation. However feasible or easy it is to do minimal competency testing, the difficult task, Mecklenburger stated, will be to defend doing it. It will be necessary to defend each test as an accurate measurement of whatever is tested, to defend that each tested item is a competency and is important enough to be worth both testing and teaching. It may be necessary also to demonstrate that the competency has been taught. It will be necessary to defend the role of the state (or school) in requiring such tests, especially if the purpose is to judge students. Finally, it will be necessary, if the tests are used to judge students, to show that the tests do not discriminate against students. These, then, are the legal challenges, reminded Mecklenburger, the use of minimal competency testing will provoke.[60] He concluded his statement by observing:

> It is quite likely that, 10 years from now, teachers and administrators will remember minimal competency testing as another short, demeaning, unlovely, ill-conceived chapter in American public education, another empty panacea with which educators created new problems and solved none.[61]

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[60] James Mecklenburger, "Minimal Competency Testing: The Bad Penny Again," Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (June, 1978), 697-99.

[61] Ibid., p. 699.

Costa claimed that the idea of minimal competency education is all wrong. To him, minimal competency education implies that someone other than the student decides what skills are important, what learnings are relevant, what features are anticipated, what the future new culture should be and what is an appropriate sequence of learning. If students leave high school still dependent upon others for directions, evaluation and reinforcement, then, Costa asked, what has their education been worth? How does competency testing promote autonomous individuals, able to take social action, to volunteer for social service, to become committed to a sound value system which individuals have tested and acquired for themselves? Costa thought the education profession would do better to put all the money earmarked for accountability and minimal competency programs into effective staff development for teachers and sound instructional materials. This would do more to help improve the schools than the current legislation provides. The schools' task in education is not to develop more competencies but rather a bigger task is to communicate to the public, parents, legislators and the community about what is uniquely important in education.[62]

Many educators shared Costa's opinion about minimal competencies. They were deeply concerned about how

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[62]Arthur L. Costa, "Competency Based Education: Let's Examine the Assumptions," Thrust for Educational Leadership, 7 (March, 1978), 11-12.

competencies were chosen and why they were chosen. Walker felt his concerns were widely shared by his colleagues in education. He wanted satisfying answers to a number of questions: How do educators determine minimum competencies? Are the 3 R's sufficient? What about practical skills? American history? Civics and government? Career entry skills? What levels should be set as minimum? Should students be able to spell 90 percent correctly, 100 percent or 75 percent correctly? Should teachers insist students be able to read TV ads and highway signs, the daily newspaper or the Constitution? These are all questions that puzzled Walker. He also wondered who is to make these decisions? Should there by a vote of the people? Should the schools rely on the experts in the field? How is education to avoid both the rigidities of a national system of minimums and the inequities and chaos of thousands of conflicting standards? Can the profession afford to develop reliable and valid tests corresponding to every district's standards or will economic pressure and public demands for equity force educators into a nationwide set of standards? How are the schools to cope, fairly, with all the special circumstances that threaten test validity such as test anxiety that causes some students to freeze up in test situations? How will educators handle bilingualism or learning disorders of various kinds. It is not surprising, maintained Walker, that lay people would overlook or discount such conceptual and technical problems.

In the public's view, the problem is simple--all children must master basic skills. Walker stressed that the problem is, indeed, much more complicated than that.[63]

In addition to being concerned about who would choose the minimal competencies and why, educational leaders were also asking what would happen to disadvantaged students. Many felt the states had failed to deal with this difficult problem. Educators also felt that the school boards across the country had failed to create competencies with a future focus. Glines pointed out that studies show disadvantaged students have a higher failure rate; most present proposed standards and tests of competencies, he claimed, would further alienate this group. The present competency movement, he went on, shows a lack of trust by the public of the efforts of teachers. It raised the question of minimum versus maximum standards. He also stated that almost all competencies are immediate or near term knowledge and skills based upon the priorities of the Industrial Age. They have not been tested against the alternative futures facing society. Educators should be asking questions such as what should, and what will education reflect in the year 2000 and beyond? What competencies and capabilities will be needed by students who will live through electronic and biomedical revolutions?

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[63]Decker F. Walker, "The Hard Lot of the Professional in a Reform Movement," Educational Leadership, 35 (November, 1977), 83-85.

Reading, writing, spelling and computing, maintained Glines, are Industrial Age skills which need reevaluation before making further major judgments related to preparing students for the years ahead. Competencies must be future focused if they are to do any good at all. How do districts measure for those skills and knowledge which will enable people to take advantage of the crises and opportunities which may emerge in the next thirty years? Competencies such as coping, choosing, relating, consuming, valuing, researching, succeeding, learning to learn, listening, identifying sources of information, responsibility, tolerance, aging, self-direction, empathy, decision-making, volunteering and leisure should have top priorities. Glines felt there is a need to go beyond the limited skills of reading, writing and computing. He insisted educators must give serious thought to survival in the future.[64]

Bracey also questioned the validity of minimal competencies. He stated that "the first mission of the schools is to produce healthy people and minimal competency testing will only exacerbate the dissatisfaction that now characterizes the American psyche."[65]

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[64]Donald Glines, "What Competencies Will Be Needed for the Future?" Thrust for Educational Leadership, March, 1978, 24-25.

[65]Gerald W. Bracey, "Some Reservations About Minimal Competency Testing," Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (April, 1978), 549-552.

Benefits Involved in Minimal Competency Education

While numerous educators throughout the nation had reservations about the new minimal competency programs, not all felt the programs were completely detrimental to the schools. Some, in fact, felt strongly that, if done properly and with involvement from all segments of the community, minimal competency education could represent a very significant development.

Gilman thought that the schools should provide students with the skills, knowledge and values needed to cope successfully in society. Minimal competency testing, assessing a student's ability to survive in a complex society will, he felt, determine standards for learning and will effect a massive critical reassessment of educational programs.[66] Gilman further claimed:

> If other schools follow the trend, minimal competency education could eventually affect every high school student in the United States. Minimal competency education could, if accompanied by a program of remedial work for students who fail the test, greatly increase the effectiveness of American schools. A high school diploma rather than merely being a certificate of attendance would signify that the holder possessed the skills necessary to be a citizen and a worker.[67]

Steiner supported minimal competency education because he felt it identified learning objectives and

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[66]David Alan Gilman, "Minimal Competency Testing: An Insurance Policy for Survival Skills," NASSP Bulletin, 27 (March, 1977), 77-84.

[67]Ibid., p. 84.

placed the teacher as a learning facilitator rather than a performer. It also individualizes instruction, claimed Steiner. With competency statements, long-range goals are more realistic because there are also performance indicators. "Minimal competency education rests on the notion that learning objectives must be identified before they can be taught or assessed."[68]

Glick, in expressing approval of the minimal competency program, stated that minimal competency education is much more comprehensive than most educational innovations of the past decade. Because minimal competency education operated on the concept of mastery learning, a complete transformation of classroom procedures and curriculum development is required. Glick recommended that specific process structures should be included in any minimal competency education program in order to prevent the curriculum from becoming too inflexible. Minimal competency education is one innovation, claimed Glick, that may be valuable in revitalizing the concept of classroom learning.[69] He concluded the observations by stating:

> In the last two years, minimal competency education has assumed the characteristics of a movement. Its influence has been felt at the college level in both schools of education and liberal

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[68]Richard L. Steiner, "The Case for Competency Based Education," Science Teacher, 42 (December, 1975), 17-18.

[69]David I. Glick, "Competency Based Education: How to Prevent a Second Orthodoxy," Educational Technology, 15 (August, 1975), 17-20.

> arts colleges. Minimal competency education promises to restructure the entire educational process.[70]

Ebel claimed that tests of minimal competency are not such a recent development as the current surge of interest in them might seem to imply. Competency tests have been around for a long time, claimed Ebel. Early in this century, pupils in the eighth grade of a rural school were given minimal competency tests to determine whether they should be admitted to the town's high school. Then, about fifty years ago, schools began to turn away from testing to assess competency in favor of testing to promote learning. Only in the last decade, as evidence of incompetence among high school graduates began to accumulate, stated Ebel, has action been taken to reinstitute minimal competency testing. If it is done properly, Ebel felt that minimal competency testing can have a strong and lasting effect on public education. Of course, minimal competency testing will not cure all the ills of contemporary education, but it will do much to correct one of the most serious of those ailments. It will help to restore concern for the cognitive development of young people. "It will motivate teachers to teach more purposefully and students to work harder to learn. That, of course, is all to the good."[71]

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[70] Ibid., p. 20.

[71] Robert L. Ebel, "The Case for Minimal Competency Testing," Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (April, 1978), 546-49.

There seems to be agreement among all educators in favor of minimal competencies that there must be maximum involvement from the community as well as staff and students. McAndrew agreed with this process. He felt that one of the reasons the Basic Competency Program in Gary, Indiana has not run aground on the issue is that there has been continual emphasis on the concept of shared responsibility. Parents, students and teachers have been part of the process. McAndrew recognized that while each is part of the problems, parents, students and teachers can also provide the solution. Developing competencies among high school graduates must, claimed McAndrew, start in the early grades. A good teacher will be able to identify those who will have trouble learning in the first year or two of school. It is important to involve teachers in any program of early intervention.[72]

In discussing the problems connected with the minimal competency education, Wise warned about the centralization of American schools. He felt that eventually, the state would be taking over the responsibilities of the local school board and that parents, in local districts, would completely lose their voice in school matters. Wise recommended that the establishment of standards and the operation of schools should be the

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[72]Gordon L. McAndrew, "Accountability and the 3 R's," The High School Journal, 60 (February, 1977), 238.

responsibility of the local board of education and its professional staff.[73]

Kurtz agreed that minimal competency standards should be developed at the local level. He did not agree, however, that the state would be taking over the local board's duties. Actually, Kurtz felt that the local districts would have more responsibilities, not less, which, to Kurtz, meant that parents in the community would become more involved in the selection and implementation of the competencies. Kurtz felt that involvement, especially by parents is one of the keys to making the minimal competency program successful. In accepting the new requirements, Kurtz exclaimed, citizens cite the increased flexibility now available at local school districts as an important advantage. Parents now believe they can have greater influence on decisions affecting their children. Perhaps the most important point, continued Kurtz, is that parents seem to feel more involved in planning their children's educational future. "This renewed involvement between parents and school, if nurtured and cared for properly, may provide a long-needed direct communication link between these groups."[74]

Massick, too, felt that competency education is an

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[73]Wise, op. cit., p. 598.

[74]William H. Kurtz, "New High School Requirements--How They Are Working," School Community, 63 (January, 1977), 11.

idea whose time has finally come. She asked what could be more logical and suitable in modern times than minimal competency education. Anxious parents want evidence that goes beyond the traditional normative grades of what their children learned in school. In addition, Massick claimed that over-burdened taxpayers want more assurance that their dollars are producing students who know something and behave properly. Harried school administrators want to produce positive evidence that learning occurs by systematic learning objectives and teacher evaluation. Hard-pressed state-level representatives and bureaucrats want to demonstrate that professional teacher standards are being upgraded by legislated teacher evaluation procedures. Questioning students demand to know the relationship between what they are asked to do in class and its application outside school. Every segment involved in the school process, stated Massick, is expressing concern that more concrete accomplishment be the result of the teaching-learning process.[75]

Several educators have begun to look at the minimal competency program with an optimistic viewpoint. Thompson predicted that, because of the minimal competency movement, educators will come to grips with the question of what an education means. A more carefully organized approach to

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[75]Rosemary G. Massick, "Competency Based Education: Inservice Implication," Thrust for Educational Leadership, 5 (November, 1975), 16-18.

teaching and a more systematic learning process would probably result from the development of minimal competency education, reported Thompson. Slow learners and underachievers would be identified more readily and would receive more direct attention. Courses would be revised to correct deficiencies discovered by competency tests. Subjects leading to the development of competencies would receive additional emphasis. The senior year, claimed Thompson, might become more attractive because of new focus on requirements and options. Best of all, the community would know precisely what a high school diploma stands for.[76]

Implementation Procedures

Brickell warned educators to carefully plan implementation procedures before actually initiating a minimal competency program in their district. In summarizing the problems of implementation, Brickell recommended that adopting a policy on minimal competency testing requires answering at least seven major questions:

> 1. What competencies will be selected? The school should begin by distinguishing between school skills and life skills, between those needed to succeed later in school and those needed to succeed later in life. Schools must choose very carefully, because they will have to live with the consequences.
> 2. How will competencies be measured? The possibilities range from testing with paper and

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[76]Scott D. Thompson, "Should a Diploma Mean a Student Has Learned Anything?" American School Board Journal, 164 (March, 1977), 41.

pencil to actual performance situations. The trouble with paper and pencil tests is that they are less likely to predict later success. The school will have to decide if it will develop its own tests or use what is available.

3. When will competencies be measured? Will the school measure competencies during school or at the end of school? Measurement should be done during school if the school believes that students' competence should be measured in order to advance from grade to grade. Students and their parents deserve a distant early warning, if there is trouble ahead. Administrators need to make changes any time students do not progress. Measurement should be done at the end of the school if the school wants to measure students' competence to move out of school and into the next school or into life.

4. Will there be only one minimum for all students or many? Will the school set one minimum for all students or will the school consider ability, special talents, family background and other factors?

5. How high will the minimum requirements be set? A cross section of any school at any grade would reveal that some students are actually performing far above that grade's requirement and others are far below. If standards are too high, too many will fail and remediation costs would be too expensive. In short, what is meant by minimally competent?

6. Will the minimum requirements be set for schools or for students? Does the school look at the individual students and concern itself about that student or does it look at the school? If the school concerns itself with the individual students, the cost, type of test, demands on the professional staff to teach every student, pressures on each student to succeed and political action by parents on each student who fails can be horrendous.

7. What will be done with the students who do not pass? Will the school give the failing student several chances? Will the school lower the standards so that students will pass? Will the school use remedial procedures so that students will pass? Will the school refuse to promote or graduate them until they pass? Will the school promote or graduate them with a restricted diploma or certificate of attendance?[77]

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[77]Henry M. Brickell, "Seven Key Notes on Minimum Competency Testing," Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (May, 1978), 589-92.

Minimal Competency Activities Throughout the Nation

In surveying the literature concerning minimal competency programs, the researcher felt it was necessary to list what the various states and selected school districts across the nation are doing in this area.

Kendrick stated that the credibility of an Oregon high school diploma was at its lowest ebb in 1976. In order to combat this situation, the Oregon Board of Education has established three major new areas of public school responsibility in developing minimal competencies. Kendrick listed them as:

> 1. Personal development--this requires that the student acquire the basic skills of reading, writing, spelling, computing, listening, speaking and analyzing.
> 2. Social responsibility--this requires the ability to cope with local and state government problems and a personal interaction with all ethnic groups within their environment.
> 3. Career development--this requires a student to acquire skills within his or her chosen field, including good work habits and attitudes. The dimension of competency, added to the more traditional course credit and attendance requirements is a move to reestablish the credibility of the high school diploma.[78]

Maryland, generalized Hornbeck, is beginning to shift the basis of the schooling process to a competency base. Maryland's first objective was to define the range of minimal competencies that are essential to an effective adult life. Hornbeck claimed there are at least five areas

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[78]William Kendrick, "Giving the Diploma Meaning," California School Boards, 36 (July/August, 1977), 25-27.

to which special attention must be given:

> 1. Basic skills--this includes reading, writing, and the ability to calculate.
> 2. The world of work--it is critically important that young people upon graduation from high school be equipped with the range of skills and attitudes that will permit the students to perform well in the job world.
> 3. The world of leisure--life time sports and the arts should not be overlooked.
> 4. Citizenship--this includes understanding the legal and judicial system and understanding the political process.
> 5. Survival skills--this includes consumer economic skills, parenting skills, certain mechanical skills and, in general, the skills for making one's way in the world.[79]

Florida, stated Fisher, has been committed to educational accountability since the late sixties. The state's Educational Accountability Act (1976) provided the focus for accountability, comprehensive planning, equivalency examinations, subject examinations and grade-to-grade promotion within the state. Part of the Accountability Act mandates the following:

> 1. A test of basic skills must be administered in grades 3, 5, 8 and 11.
> 2. The Fundamental Literacy Test (reading, writing and arithmetic) must be passed for high school graduation.
> 3. Students must meet the local district requirements regarding courses and credits in addition to passing the competency test.
> 4. Provisions for an early exit exam are included. Students choosing to take the exam must leave school if they pass the test.[80]

In Colorado, the schools operate a testing program

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[79]David W. Hornbeck, "Maryland's 'Project Basic,'" Educational Leadership, 35 (November, 1977), 98-101.

[80]Thomas H. Fisher, "Florida's Approach to Competency Testing," Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (May, 1978), 599-602.

designed to assure that high school graduates possess minimum competence in four basic areas: arithmetic, spelling, grammar and reading comprehension. To graduate, Beal reported, a senior must pass tests in all four areas. If the student fails, a certificate of attendance will be given to that student but not a diploma. The Colorado legislation requires that local boards conform to the following state guidelines: (1) instruction must be provided based on test results: (2) tests shall be given twice a year; and (3) remedial and tutorial services shall be provided within the school day until the students pass the exam.[81]

In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina. Huff reported that competency tests have emerged as a strong focal point of the basic education movement in order to determine whether students have gained minimum skills in the schools. After a lengthy investigation into what the district felt was needed in the schools and what the parents demanded, teachers and administrators proposed the following points:

> 1. Minimal survival skill tests in reading and math must be given to all tenth graders in October and repeated every semester until passed.
> 2. All diplomas awarded by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools must be under the same competency requirements.
> 3. Students who fail to pass the competency tests in both areas, but who have met the other

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[81]Barry B. Beal, "Denver, Colorado: A 17 Year Old Minimum Competency Program," Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (May, 1978), 610-11.

> requirements for graduation must be given a copy of the high school record in lieu of the student's diploma at graduation and be allowed to continue taking the tests after leaving school.
>
> 4. Remedial programs must be developed for students who do not pass the competency tests.[82]

Thomas summarized that setting performance standards for high school graduation is a demand for excellence. Establishing levels of competence prior to graduation is simply requiring students to perform well in basic areas--reading, mathematics, science and social studies. With that philosophy in mind, Thomas went on, the Salt Lake City schools began to move toward promotion and graduation based on survival skills in the spring of 1975. Since then, the board has received public acclaim and been commended in local editorials and television programs and received letters of appreciation from many teachers, parents and citizens. Essentially, the board policy indicated that students who do not achieve grade level basic skills will not be advanced to a higher grade level. Students who do not demonstrate basic competencies at the high school level will not be graduated. Graduation requirements, which begin with the Class of 1980, will include the accumulation of course credits and demonstrated competencies in reading, language arts and mathematics. Competencies, added Thomas,

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[82]Marylyn Huff, "A Board Member Looks at Requiring Competencies for Graduation," Educational Leadership, 35 (November, 1977), 108-12.

in other areas will be added in future years.[83]

In Charleston, West Virginia, the impetus did not come from the legislation, claimed Candor-Chandler, but from the County Board of Education. The board asked the administration to study standards of achievement and report back to them. The three key elements in the plan the board finally adopted, according to Candor-Chandler, included:

> 1. Student achievement will be monitored regularly, beginning with informal checks of reading and mathematics progress by first and second grade teachers.
> 2. Parents will be notified by school personnel of any deficiencies in reading or math that a student might have.
> 3. Beginning with the graduating class of 1982, all high school students will be tested to measure their competence in reading and mathematics. Basic skills competency certificates will be attached to the diploma and made an official part of a student's permanent record card and transcript.[84]

Cook felt that a self-described revolution is occurring in the school system in Washington, D.C. While no programs have been adopted as yet, the public schools of the District of Columbia are taking steps toward a minimal competency educational program that will prepare everyone for the day when the school board may decide to establish minimal competency graduation requirements. The District of Columbia Public Schools system, stated Cook, has made a firm public commitment to spend three years

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[83] Don Thomas, "Return to Excellence," California School Boards, 36 (July/August, 1977), 28-29.

[84] James Candor-Chandler, "Charleston, West Virginia: Competency Requirements for Students," Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (May, 1978), 611-12.

planning for a systematic move toward minimal competency education. The planning will involve teachers, administrators, parents and students. Clearly, concluded Cook, the top priority in the school system is the move toward minimal competency education.[85]

In Gary, Indiana, the high school diploma lacked meaning, reported Henderson. Graduation from high school did not always indicate that a student had mastered the minimum skills necessary to function in society. As a major step to resolve this problem, the Gary Board of School Trustees, in September, 1974, adopted a policy extending the graduation requirements to include demonstrated proficiency in reading, mathematics and written communication. All students except the mentally handicapped are required to show by examination that they are able to: (1) read, speak and understand English; (2) write a simple, intelligible paragraph; and (3) perform fundamental mathematical processes. The reading and mathematics policy became effective for students graduating in June, 1977. The requirement for written proficiency becomes effective for students graduating in June, 1979 and oral proficiency will be required beginning with the graduating class of June, 1980.[86]

Omaha, Nebraska, Findley wrote, has developed a

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[85]J. Marvin Cook, "The D.C. Schools' Plan for System-wide Achievement," Educational Leadership, 35 (November, 1977), 114-17.

[86]Donald J. Henderson, "Gary, Indiana: High School Diplomas with Meaning," Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (May, 1978), 15-17.

reasonable approach to minimal competencies. Competencies are a part of the program but they are not the only part. After meeting for one year, the competency committee, made up of teachers and administrators, decided that traditional graduation requirements should be maintained and, in addition, competency tests in certain areas would be required before graduation could be complete. These tests would be given early in a student's high school career, so that appropriate remedial help could be given. Minimal competency requirements would not dominate the curriculum to the point of excluding courses with expectations well beyond the minimum, stressed Findley. The tests consisted of the following: (1) the Democratic Process Test; (2) the Math Test; (3) the Reading Test; (4) the Problem Solving Test; (5) the Citizenship Test.[87]

Summary

This chapter has attempted to show how minimal competency testing has evolved directly from the accountability movement.

Because of public demands, the idea of accountability has taken hold in the classrooms across the nation. For the purpose of this study, accountability has been defined as a system that has, as its main objective, the supplying of accurate information concerning student performances to the public. In order to develop such a system, goals and priorities are established by members of the community and professional educators within the

district. Methods are devised and utilized at the end of the school year to show that students have either met certain proposed standards or have not. The student, therefore, is held accountable for his academic achievement.

The public demand for accountability actually began around 1911. Due to the influence of Frederick Taylor, an industrial engineer who insisted his methods of scientific management could be effectively used to solve all the problems of education, the second decade of the twentieth century was devoted to criticizing the schools for not making good use of Taylor's methods. The public wanted results that not only could be seen but measured as well. From 1930 until the 1960's, public interest in accountability procedures waned. It was renewed in 1970 when President Nixon suggested that education should be held accountable to the public for what it produces or does not produce and students should be held accountable for what they learn and do not learn.

In the wake of the President's speech and because leading educators and community leaders recommended them, accountability procedures were implemented in school districts throughout the nation. As these procedures were initiated into programs, it became clear to parents that students at the various levels were not meeting reasonable standards of achievement. Scores in reading, writing and computation, especially, were down...something had to be done!

People began calling for basic education in the schools. To the public, basic education meant that before students graduated from high school, they should at least be able to read at an eighth grade level, write with accuracy and possess computational skills. While some educators felt that going back to the basics was really going back to the dark ages of education, the majority saw it as a challenge and an opportunity--a challenge for all the youngsters who could not read and write properly and an opportunity for education to regain the respect it had once enjoyed from the public.

Within a very short period of time, the majority of districts were stressing computation, reading and writing skills. But to simply teach basic skills was not sufficient. There was a need to test them as well in order to make sure they had been taught properly. To do this, many states began passing minimal competency laws. These laws stated that students had to pass certain reading, writing and computational skills before graduating from high school.

At the close of 1976, seven states had enacted legislation and another nine states had taken action to mandate some form of minimal competency activity. Setting standards for high school graduation or grade-to-grade promotion was the main goal of this activity. Since January of 1977, ten states have introduced new minimal competency legislation and many more are expected to follow in the coming years.

With the passing of minimal competencies by numerous state legislation and school boards, several educators have questioned the fairness of the program. In addition, some critics claimed it would contribute to the growing centralization of American schools. Others claimed there were too many unsolvable problems connected with the concept. How, they wondered, would minimal competencies be determined? Who would make the decisions? How could education avoid a national system of minimums and inequities of conflicting standards? How could valid tests be developed and what could be used to measure them? In addition to being concerned about those questions, leaders were also asking what would happen to disadvantaged, bilingual and special education students?

Not all educators condemned the minimal competency program, however. Some, in fact, felt that, if done properly and with the involvement of the community, minimal competency education could prove to represent a very significant development in educational programs. Of course there are many problems still to be solved. Major concerns involve time and money--not enough of either. Also, formulating the standards, assessing the competence of learners, implementing a proper program and evaluating it will all be major concerns to educators in the future.

The Hart Bill (AB 3408), signed by the Governor on September 9, 1976, has two main purposes, according to Hart. The first purpose is to create public dialogue at the local

level regarding the skills students should accumulate before graduating from high school. The second purpose is to encourage schools to focus attention and remediation on students who have difficulty mastering reading, writing or mathematics. School districts are required to assess students periodically, at least once in the junior high school years and twice in grades ten through eleven to determine whether each student is meeting the required standards. In the case of a student who has not mastered basic skills, the principal must arrange a conference with the classroom teacher, the student and the student's parents in order to discuss the assessment results. Starting in July, 1980, school districts are not to award a high school diploma to any students who have not met the locally adopted proficiency standards.

Several districts in California began working on ways to implement minimal competencies before the Hart Bill was introduced in the California Legislature. The majority of districts, however, have had problems complying with the intent of the Hart Bill in such a short duration of time. Those districts have had to look to the California Department of Education, districts with experience in establishing minimal competencies and any existing models that might be available.

In Chapter 3, the methodology the research will use to establish a model for selecting and implementing minimal competencies will be discussed.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study was descriptive and employed the interview as the primary data-gathering technique. The procedures used in conducting this study are presented in detail in this chapter. These procedural steps follow: (1) a review of the relevant literature (presented in Chapter 2); (2) the construction of an interview instrument to gather specific information on how minimum competencies in curriculum areas can be identified and to ascertain the most beneficial methods of implementing the Hart Bill; (3) the selection of twelve unified school districts in California for interviews (see rationale for selection below); (4) the administration of the interview; (5) the tabulation and treatment of the data; and (6) the development of a model designed to assist districts in the identification and implementation of minimal competencies. Explication of each procedure appears below.

Review of the Related Literature

A review of the related literature (see Chapter 2) was made to determine what had been written about the area of minimal competencies in education. Steps leading up to the implementation of minimal competencies in the schools

were discussed in general and the subjects of accountability, basic education and minimal competency education were discussed, specifically.

Construction of the Interview Instrument

The interview was the principal method used for collecting data for this study. The interview instrument was constructed by consulting the related literature, talking to authorities in the field and by utilizing the researcher's professional judgment. The rationale for using the interview was described by Kerlinger as one of the most powerful tools of behavioral research.[1] He went on to point out that:

> The self-administered questionnaire has been used too much, especially in educational research, and the structured interview too little. The success of the interview in sociology and psychology should encourage educational researchers to master its intricacies and to use it where it is clearly appropriate.[2]

Van Dalen also has emphasized the importance of the interview by stating that many people are more willing to communicate orally than in writing and, therefore, will provide data more readily in an interview than on a questionnaire.[3] The interview instrument was divided into

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[1]Fred N. Kerlinger, Foundations of Behavioral Research (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Publishing Co., 1964), p. 476.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Deobold B. Van Dalen, Understanding Educational Research (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., 1966), p. 306.

five parts. Part One discussed the selection of committee personnel. Part Two sought to identify specific competencies. Part Three surveyed the instruments used to measure the competencies. Part Four described how minimal competencies were integrated into the district. Part Five suggested what the disposition of students who did not attain the adopted competency levels should be. (The interview instrument can be found in Appendix A.)

The final part of the interview utilized one of the major strong points of the interview as a research tool, i.e., its ability to elicit from the respondents their thoughts in a flexible and adaptable manner. It was desirable to have this part appear at the end of the interview, so that the subjects could consider and supply any additional, pertinent information concerning the implementation and identification of minimal competencies.

Explanation of the Purpose

The interview instrument used was primarily a structured one; therefore, it was important that the explanation of its purpose to interviewees be standardized. Gordon stated, "The purpose of the interview should be explained in terms the respondent can understand and in a manner which will account for all types of questions which are going to be asked."[4]

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[4]Raymond L. Gordon, Interviewing, Strategy, Techniques, and Tactics (Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press Publishing Co., 1969), p. 167.

Validation of the Interview Instrument

Validity is regarded as the most important requisite needed for good measurement.[5] An instrument is valid when it measures what it is intended to measure.[6] In order to assure the validity of the instrument, a panel of field testers was selected. The panel consisted of eleven professional educators, including three professors of education, three building principals, one school psychologist, one district office administrator (assistant superintendent), and three teachers. The panel checked the instrument to assure that the questions were clear, relevant and that their significance related directly to the topic of identifying and implementing minimal competencies in California unified school districts by using a two-point Likert forced-choice scale-of-agreement. (The scale was included in the test instrument.) If 75 percent of the panel strongly agreed on each item, the researcher considered the item valid. If less than 75 percent but more than 50 percent of the panel agreed on a specific item, it was reworded according to suggestions of the panel, and submitted to the panel again. If less than 50 percent of the panel agreed on an item, the item was eliminated from the interview instrument.

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[5]Victor H. Noll and Dale P. Scannel, Introduction to Educational Measurement (New York: Houghton Mifflin Publishing Co., 1972), p. 135.

[6]John T. Roscoe, Fundamental Research Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), p. 101.

Selection of the Sample

The interview instrument was presented to a sample of seventeen administrators in twelve unified school districts throughout California. The districts interviewed were the Azusa Unified School District, Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District, Pasadena Unified School District, Los Angeles Unified School District, Irvine Unified School District, Newport-Mesa Unified School District, Palo Alto Unified School District, Monterey Unified School District, San Jose Unified School District, San Juan Unified School District, San Lorenzo Unified School District and Torrance Unified School District. The number of school districts was limited; however, the districts interviewed served approximately one million students, which represents about 25 percent of the state's pupil population. Therefore, enough adequate information was available to construct the model.

Rationale for Selection of School School Districts

Rationale for selecting the sample was based on the opinions and judgments of knowledgeable people working in the field of minimal competencies and the related surveyed literature. All or some of the districts interviewed were recommended by the following experts:

1. David W. Gordon, Assistant Chief, Office of Program Evaluation and Research, California Department of Education

2. Richard Stiles, Consultant, Office of Program Evaluation and Research, California Department of Education

3. William Noble, Consultant, Secondary Education, Evaluation and Research, California Department of Education

4. Henry Andrews, Consultant, Office of Program Evaluation and Research, California Department of Education

5. Chris Pipho, Associate Director, Department of Research and Information, Education Commission of the States, Research and Information Department, Denver, Colorado

6. Linda Bond, Consultant, Education Committee of the California State Assembly, Subcommittee on Educational Reform

7. James Olivera, Professional Development Program Executive, Association of California School Administrators

8. Arthur N. Thayer, Assistant Executive Director, Association of California School Administrators

9. Dale Burklund, Director of Guidance, Office of the Santa Clara County California Superintendent of Schools

10. Warren Newman, Assistant Director of Program Evaluation, Research and Pupil Services, Office of the Los Angeles County California Superintendent of Schools

Each of the above named experts had personal knowledge of school districts working in minimal competencies. Their rationale for suggesting these districts was that the districts had been working on minimal competencies prior to passage of the Hart Bill and had produced a practical program for identifying and implementing those competencies.

Administration of the Interview

The administration of the interview was planned carefully. Leedy wrote that the interview, as a data-gathering technique, is frequently misunderstood:

> Most students think of it as simply asking questions. Interviews should be considered as strictly professional situations which demand equally professional planning and conduct on the part of the interviewer. Before actually conducting the interview, the interviewer must be certain to take steps which will assure him of success. These steps are simple but very important.[7]

Before the actual interview, the writer took the following steps:

1. Three weeks prior to the desired time of the interview, the researcher sent a letter to the superintendent of each school district, soliciting participation in the study. The letter also explained why the particular school district had been selected and approximately how long the interview would actually take. In all cases, the districts agreed to participate.

2. Two weeks prior to the interview, the writer telephoned the district to set up the actual date for the interview. At that time, the researcher ascertained who the designated administrator was in charge of implementing minimal competencies by inquiring of the secretary to the superintendent. The researcher then asked to speak to the designated administrator directly. In ten out of the

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[7]Paul Leedy, Practical Research--Planning and Design (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 85-87.

twelve school districts called, the designated administrator in charge of minimal competencies already had been given the researcher's initial letter of explanation and was aware of the researcher's intentions. In two of the twelve school districts, the designated administrator in charge of minimal competencies had not been given the researcher's letter and was not aware of the researcher's intentions. At that time, the researcher explained the reasons and rationale for an interview. Despite the fact that it was a busy time of the school year, all twelve districts were cooperative and agreed to the interview. (Letters of explanation, confirmation and appreciation are found in Appendix C.)

3. Approximately one week prior to the interview, the writer sent the designated interviewees a letter confirming the time of the interview. In the confirmation letter, the writer reiterated the purpose of the interview and named the five areas which the interviewer intended to cover.

4. On the appointed day of the interview, the writer once again explained the rationale for the interview and indicated approximately how long it would take.

A copy of the interview instrument was given to the interviewees to be used as a guideline during the interview. At the beginning of each interviewing session, permission was asked to have the interview tape-recorded. Travers stated that without suitable instrumentation and

mechanization, the data collected are likely to be of only the most limited value:

> Such data are commonly referred to as dirty because any findings are likely to reflect the influence of a host of important uncontrolled variables. Data collected must always be as clean as possible. There are substantial advantages to be accrued from the procedure of recording an entire interview. With the development of pocket-size tape recorders, there is the possibility of making a complete record of the verbal interaction.[8]

Wise wrote that, although the preplanning of the interview was highly structured, the actual conversation may be only loosely structured. For this reason, open-ended questions are successful in the interview.[9] Therefore, the interviewer attempted to utilize open-ended questions and encouraged the interviewees to elaborate on responses in detail. At the conclusion of the interview, the researcher requested and received from the interviewees such written materials as: (1) committee reports; (2) performance indicators for competencies; and (3) timetables for implementing the competencies. One week after the interview, the writer sent a letter of appreciation to the interviewees, thanking the interviewees for the time and cooperation.

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[8]Robert M. Travers, An Introduction to Educational Research (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1969), p. 200.

[9]John E. Wise, Methods of Research in Education (Boston: D.C. Heath Publishing Co., 1967), pp. 103-04.

Tabulation and Treatment of the Data

After all the data were collected from the selected school districts and analyzed, the writer constructed a model which illustrated: (1) how individuals were selected to serve on committees to choose minimal competencies; (2) how minimal competencies in each district were identified and established; (3) how instruments were selected to measure the minimal competencies; (4) how minimal competencies were implemented into the program; and (5) how remediation procedures were utilized with students. The writer constructed the model by taking a consensus of all districts interviewed. If 75 percent of all districts agreed in methods and procedures, the writer included them into the model. The nature of the questions in the instrument allowed the researcher to determine the extent of the agreement. If there was less than 75 percent agreement among the interviewees, the items were excluded. The level of 75 percent was chosen as a criterion to be as sure as possible that the differences were not chance. Testing differences with a group of twelve districts using the chi square technique at 75 percent indicates the value would be obtained by chance less than ten times out of 100. This level of probability is sufficiently high for purposes of this study. ($\chi^2=3.00$, df=1, $P < .10$)

Summary

This chapter has discussed, in detail, the procedures used in this study. The major steps in these procedures were:

1. A review of the related literature was made to determine what had been written about the area of minimal competencies in education. Steps leading up to the implementation of minimal competencies in the schools were discussed and the subjects of accountability, basic education and minimal competency education were discussed, specifically.

2. An interview instrument was constructed by consulting the related literature, talking to authorities in the field and by using the researcher's professional judgment. The interview instrument was divided into five parts: (1) the selection of committee personnel; (2) the selection of competencies; (3) the selection of instruments to measure the competencies; (4) the implementation of the competencies; and (5) the remediation procedures used with students.

3. The interview instrument was validated by having a panel of eleven professional educators check the instrument to assure that the questions were clear, relevant and that their significance related directly to the topic of indentifying and implementing minimal competencies.

4. Curriculum directors and coordinators in twelve California unified school districts were selected to be interviewed by the researcher. The districts interviewed served approximately one million students, which represented about 25 percent of the state's pupil population.

5. The rationale for selecting the twelve school districts was based on the opinions and judgments of knowledgeable people working in the field of minimal competencies and the related surveyed literature. These knowledgeable people consisted of personnel working for the California State Department of Education, the Resource and Information Department of the Education Commission of the States, the Education Committee of the California State Assembly and the Association of California School Administrators.

6. Three weeks before the actual interviewing took place, the researcher sent a letter to the superintendent of each district explaining the reasons for requesting an interview. Two weeks prior to the interview, the researcher telephoned the district to set up the date for the interview. One week before the interview, the researcher sent the designated interviewee a letter confirming the time of the interview. At the time of the interview the researcher explained, again, the rationale for the interview and a copy of the interview instrument was given to the interviewee. Each interview session was tape-recorded by the

researcher. One week after the interview, a letter of appreciation was sent to the interviewee.

7. After all the data were collected from the selected school districts, the writer constructed a model which illustrated how competencies were identified, measured and implemented in California unified school districts by using the consensual opinions of the school districts interviewed.

Chapter 4

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The collected data are presented and discussed in this chapter. The principal method used for collecting data was the interview. The interview instrument was constructed by consulting related literature, talking to authorities in the field and by utilizing the researcher's professional judgment. It was divided into five parts. Part One discussed the selection of committee personnel. Part Two discussed how minimal competencies were selected. Part Three surveyed the instrument used to measure the competencies. Part Four described how minimal competencies were implemented in the district and Part Five discussed the remediation procedures to take place after the students take the competency exams. The instrument was validated by a panel of field testers consisting of eleven professional educators, who checked the instrument to make sure the questions were clear, relevant and that their significance related directly to the topic of identifying and implementing minimal competencies.

Seventeen administrators in twelve unified school districts throughout California were interviewed by the researcher. The districts providing data served approximately one million students, which represent about

25 percent of the state's pupil population. Each district was recommended to the researcher by knowledgeable people working in the field of minimal competencies.

After the data were collected from the selected school districts, the writer classified responses from all districts. Because each interviewee had been asked basically the same questions, it was possible to make a summary of the responses.

In all responses but two, there was a consensus of agreement from all twelve districts. There was no consensus on the questions of frequency of meetings or length of each meeting. However, when the researcher asked whether these questions were relevant to the construction of a model, all interviewees replied in the negative.

Selection of Committee Personnel

The interviewees were asked to identify the main groups of people represented on the main working committee. Of the twelve districts interviewed, nine (75 percent) indicated the committee was made up of teacher representatives from each school and the Director of Curriculum. Two (17 percent) replied that the committee had representatives of parents, teachers and students. One (8 percent) district had no official committee. The general agreement among the interviewees was that the main working committee consisted of teacher representatives (mostly department heads but not always) and the Director of Curriculum. Parents were used

in an advisory capacity but not included in the main working committees.

Choosing the Committee Members

The respondents were asked who actually chose the members to serve on the main committee. Nine (75 percent) of the twelve districts reported that the members of the committee were chosen by the principals of the individual schools. Where parents and students were also represented on the main committee, parents were chosen by other parents and students were chosen by other students in student councils. One (8 percent) district replied that members of the committee were chosen by members of the faculty. One district said that members were chosen by the teacher's union and one district reported that there was not an official committee. The consensus was that the principals chose the members to serve on the main committee. Curriculum directors requested that principals choose teachers who were: (1) flexible; (2) natural leaders; and (3) respected by the staff.

Choosing the Chairman of the Committee

The respondents were asked how the chairman of the main committee was selected. Ten (83 percent) of the respondents indicated that the superintendent selected the chairman of the committee. One (8 percent) district said the chairman was voted in by members of the committee and

one district reported that there was not an official committee. The consensus was that the chairman of the main committee was selected by the superintendent of the district. Most superintendents felt that chairing the committee was a normal function of the Curriculum Director's job.

Dividing Committee Members into Subcommittees

The practitioners in the field were asked to respond to the question: Were committee members divided into subcommittees? Eleven respondents (92 percent) replied that there were subcommittees within each committee. One (8 percent) district replied that there was not an official committee. The consensus for this question was that the main committee was divided into subcommittees. Because all eleven districts were charged with implementing competencies in math, reading and writing, the subcommittees were mainly concerned with these three subjects. All committee members met first with the large general committee, then split up into subcommittees. Math teachers met with the math competency subcommittee, reading teachers met with the reading competency subcommittee and language arts teachers met with the writing competency subcommittee. Teachers in each subcommittee discussed which competencies they felt were the most important and why they were important. Ranking competencies, however, was not done until the subcommittees met in the main committee as a whole.

Frequency of Committee Meetings

The interviewees were asked to discuss how often the main committees had to meet when establishing minimal competencies for their districts. Five (43 percent) districts met eight times or less to establish competencies. Seven (58 percent) districts met at least twelve times or more to select the competencies. Of those seven, five (71 percent) met twenty-five times or more during the years. The average frequency of meetings was twenty-one times. There was no consensus to this particular question but when the researcher asked whether this question was relevant to the construction of a model, all interviewees replied in the negative. The main thing to be learned from this question is that districts should allow at least one year for planning minimal competencies. In this amount of time, it is possible to have an adequate amount of meetings without overloading teachers.

Length of Each Meeting

The practitioners in the field were asked how long each meeting lasted. Eight (67 percent) districts replied that meetings were held on a half-day basis and lasted at least three hours. Four (33 percent) stated that their meetings lasted at least eight hours and were held as all-day sessions. There was no consensus to this particular question but when the researcher asked whether this question was important to the construction of a model, all

interviewees replied in the negative. The main thing to be learned from this question is that teachers should be given released time and meetings should be held either for a half-day session or a full-day session. Al twelve districts adhered to this procedure.

Ideal Length of Each Meeting

The respondents were asked how long meetings should be in order to be effective. Nine (75 percent) replied that half-day sessions of three hours was the most effective period of time. Three (25 percent) maintained that all-day sessions of eight hours was the most advantageous. All twelve districts strongly agreed that teachers should get released time in order to attend the meetings and not have to attend after working hours are over. The consensus was that half-day sessions of three hours would be the most effective period of time. Interviewees made this judgment based on their experience of meeting with committees over a one-year time span.

Ideal Time for the Meetings

When interviewees were asked when the meetings were usually held, nine (75 percent) said that they were held in the afternoon, usually from 1:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M. Three (25 percent) districts indicated that the meetings lasted all day from 8:00 A.M. until 4:00 P.M. or later. The consensus for this question was that the meetings should be held in the afternoon session. In this way,

teachers would be able to be with their students in the morning session which usually is devoted to teaching the basic subjects such as reading, language arts and math.

Total Time Taken to Select and Establish Minimal Competencies

The respondents were asked how much time elapsed from the time their committee first met until competencies were actually adopted. Nine (75 percent) districts said it took approximately one year from the time of their first meeting until competencies were recommended to the board. One of the nine said it took about a year and a half. Three (25 percent) districts indicated it took at least two years to select and establish their competencies. The consensus of opinion was that at least one year is needed in order to select and establish minimal competencies in the school district. Interviewees felt it was essential that other school districts planning competencies become cognizant of this fact. Anything less than one year would prove an insufficient amount of time and most likely would result in an ineffective minimal competency program.

Problems Encountered During Committee Meetings

The districts were asked what kinds of problems were encountered during committee meetings. All districts admitted to long discussions, heated debates and even hostile differences of opinions at times. However, because of the type of person selected for the committee, each

district replied that the arguments were worked out in a rational and logical manner. Credit for working through differences of opinions was mainly given to: (1) a skillful chairman who clarified the issues and let everyone express his opinion; (2) a system of ranking the different competencies in order of their importance; and (3) a high caliber of professional educators who participated on the committees. Eleven (92 percent) districts replied that the most difficult problem encountered by the committees was coming to a consensus on which competencies were the most important. Some members felt practical or survival competencies should be chosen. Other members of the committees wanted only learned competencies. Still others wanted a combination of learned and practical competencies. Some members wanted the competencies to be difficult while others felt that the competencies should be only the very minimal. Several districts indicated that it was difficult keeping the committee members on the subject of competencies. Only one (8 percent) district said that the biggest problem encountered was hostility from teachers. Teachers in the particular district were worried that they would lose their academic autonomy. They were also worried that they would be judged on the amount of students passing or failing the competencies. This particular problem was not experienced by any of the other twelve districts. This question, interviewees felt, was one of the most important questions in the interview. The consensus said that the

most difficult problem encountered by the committees was coming to a general agreement on which competencies were the most important. Once that was decided, it was comparatively easy to make the selection.

Role of the Committee Chairman

The respondents were asked what role the chairman of the committee took. Eleven (92 percent) districts said that the committee chairman acted as "facilitator" in the group. The chairman outlined what had to be done, clarified the issues and the statements made by committee members. He made sure everyone had a chance to speak and he kept the members on the subject of competencies. All eleven districts emphasized that the chairman, while giving structure to the meetings, did not in any way dominate them. Instead, he listened and reiterated and gave everyone the feeling that they were an important part of the team. Only one (8 percent) district said the chairman dominated the meeting by giving the teachers his ideas on competencies before discussion took place. After the chairman outlined his ideas, he asked members for approval or disapproval. The consensus for this question was that the role of the committee chairman was that of facilitator. His main duties were: (1) to delineate what had to be done; (2) to define and clarify the issues; and (3) to keep all committee members actively involved in the discussions.

Methods Used to Avoid Conflicts at Meetings

The interviewees were asked what methods the chairman used at the meetings to avoid conflicts. Nine (75 percent) districts replied that having all committee members rank competencies in order of their importance was the most effective way of avoiding major conflicts. Several districts indicated that this method was absolutely essential and competencies could not have been selected without it. By using this method, no suggestions by committee members were ignored. Instead, all competencies were listed and then ranked. One (8 percent) district said that clarifying issues was the main method used by the chairman. One district mentioned that by analyzing the competencies thoroughly, conflicts were avoided and one district felt that arguments and conflicts were avoided by giving the teachers a chance to veto competencies suggested by the consultant. All interviewees agreed that this question was extremely important to the construction of a model. The consensus was that in order to avoid conflicts, all committee members were asked to rank the suggested competencies in order of their importance. In this way, no committee member's suggestions were ignored. All were considered and ranked.

Additional Effective Methods Utilized at Meetings

Respondents were asked to list additional effective

methods used at the meetings to make them smoother running. Nine (75 percent) respondents said the most important element in making the meetings effective was getting every committee member actively involved in the discussions that took place. It was essential that all members were made to feel that their opinions were important and that they were there for a purpose. Two (17 percent) respondents felt that the meetings were made effective by having the chairman carefully identifying the problems and then pointing out to the committee what needed to be done. One (8 percent) thought that meetings were effective because the chairman kept the members together and on the subject of minimal competencies. The consensus for this question was that in order to make meetings more effective, the chairman needed to make sure every member was actively involved. This required encouraging the committee members and calling on all the members that were present.

Community Involvement in the Selection of Competencies

Interviewees were asked if community members were given an opportunity to express their opinions about minimal competencies. Nine (75 percent) of the interviewees replied that parents were given a chance to express their opinions after competencies had been selected by the main working committee made up mainly of teachers and the Director of Curriculum. One (11 percent) of the nine interviewees explained that curriculum specialists simply

attended PTA meetings in order to inform parents of what was going on and to answer any questions they might have. The remaining interviewees said that after competencies were selected by teachers, parents were given a chance to revise, add or subtract competencies of their own at parent meetings. The revised competencies then went back to the main committee for more revision and final selection. In two cases, parents were given the opportunity of revising the competencies for a second time. One (8 percent) of the twelve districts said that parents were given the chance to select competencies before they went to the main committee of teachers. Two (17 percent) districts out of the twelve said that parents were put on the main committee from the beginning of the meetings and asked, along with the professionals, to select the competencies. The consensus for this question was that parents were given a chance to express their opinions after the competencies had been selected by the main committee. Parents were given the opportunity to revise and even change competencies but the main committee had the final approval of the competencies before they were recommended to the board.

Selection of Personnel for the Parent Committee

The interviewees were asked if parents were selected for the committees or did they volunteer. Nine (75 percent) interviewees replied that the parents had volunteered for the committee. Two (17 percent) said that

parents had been allowed to volunteer in the beginning but their numbers had grown so large that they had to be selected by the principals of the individual schools and one (8 percent) said that there was no official parent committee. The consensus for this question was that parents volunteered for the committee. Most districts agreed that it would be unwise to keep parents that wanted to serve off the committees. They felt that a disgruntled parent could do far more harm to the district if he or she was not actively involved in the committee process.

Problems Encountered at Parent Meetings

Respondents were asked to name the main problems that were encountered at the parent meetings. All districts had active discussions on whether competencies should test application skills or learned skills. Nine (75 percent) districts argued over whether the standards were set high enough. One (8 percent) district said the biggest problem was that parents really did not understand what minimal competencies were all about. One (8 percent) said there were no real problems at the meetings and two (17 percent) districts were worried that some competencies would discriminate against certain ethnic groups or limited English speaking students and argued that the competencies should be given in the student's native tongue. These concerns, however, were not resolved at the parent meetings. The consensus for this question was that the parent

committees were mostly concerned over whether standards were set high enough. In order to lessen those concerns, interviewees recommended that a spokesman from the district attend the parent meetings in order to explain the consequences of setting competency standards too high.

Time and Location of Parent Meetings

Respondents were asked to describe when and where parent meetings were held. Nine (75 percent) of the respondents replied that parents met on a monthly basis during the evenings at an individual school site. One (8 percent) respondent said that parent meetings were held once a week for eight weeks at the school during the evenings. One district held parent meetings four times during the whole school year in the evenings at the school and one district held parent meetings in the afternoon at the school on a monthly basis. The consensus was that parent meetings were held on a monthly basis during the evenings at an individual school site. Monthly meetings, interviewees felt, were important in order to keep parents and the community informed on the progress that was being made.

Main Activity of the Parent Committee

The interviewees were asked to name the main activity of the parents during their meetings. Nine (75 percent) interviewees said that the main activity of

the parents was to revise, discuss and rank competencies that had already been selected by the main committee. One (8 percent) interviewee said that the main activity was to simply learn about the requirements of the Hart Bill. Two (17 percent) interviewees replied that the main activity was selecting competencies along with the professionals who were present at the meetings. The consensus was that the main activity was to discuss and rank competencies that had already been selected by the main committee and then to revise them, if necessary. In that way, parents felt involved and they felt that their opinions were actually important to the process.

Student Involvement in the Selection of Competencies

Respondents were asked if students were given the opportunity to express their opinions about competencies. Ten (83 percent) of the respondents said that several students were chosen by the school's student council and served on the parent committee. One (8 percent) respondent replied that there was some discussion at student council meetings but input was minimal as there were no official committee meetings. One respondent said that school officers from each high school served on the main committee along with parents and professionals. The consensus for this question was that students chosen by each school's student council were allowed to attend and participate in the parent committee meetings. In this way, students

obtaining opinions from their fellow students at their individual high schools were allowed to give input at the parent meetings.

Selection of Minimal Competencies

Respondents were asked which competencies students had to pass in order to graduate from high school. Ten districts (83 percent) said that in order to graduate, students must pass competencies in reading, writing and computation. Two (17 percent) districts replied that students must pass additional competencies. One district listed social studies, science and career education. One district said that in addition to reading, writing and math, students must pass competencies in basic health skills. The consensus was that in order to graduate from high school, students must exhibit competencies in reading, writing and computation. Most interviewees were of the opinion that additional competencies would be required in the near future.

Grade Level Expectations

When asked at which grade level a student was expected to read before graduating from school, one (8 percent) district replied that students were expected to read on a ninth grade level before graduation and one district said the students must read on an eighth grade level before they are allowed to graduate. The overwhelming consensus was that no grade level for reading competencies should be

specified. When asked the main reason for not specifying a grade level at which a student is expected to read before graduating, ten (83 percent) of the district said there would be too much conflict among the community. Some parents would say the grade was too low and others would say it was too high. The community, interviewees claimed, would never come to an agreement because of so many diverse opinions and the districts would run the risk of alienating at least half of the community. Hence, the consensus was that no grade level was specified by the districts.

Criteria for Passing Reading Competencies

All districts indicated that the student must demonstrate the ability to read with understanding. All districts said that the student must demonstrate knowledge in the categories of: (1) word meaning, (2) structural analysis, (3) comprehension, and (4) study skills. In the area of word meaning, all twelve districts required that the student be able to recognize and use specific words within a context. In the area of structural analysis, all twelve districts stated that students must recognize beginning and ending letters, recognize suffixes, prefixes, compound words, synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, syllables, vowel sounds, plurals, possessives, contractions and root words. In the area of comprehension, all districts required students to identify the main idea of selected reading material, summarize, paraphrase, analyze, be able

to tell the relevant from the irrelevant and distinguish between statements of fact and statements of opinion. In the area of study skills, all districts required students to demonstrate knowledge in alphabetizing and to be able to use the encyclopedia, dictionary and card catalogue. In addition, they must be familiar with how to find a book in the library, how to read maps and how to use a table of contents. A consensus was made of all categories by the researcher by collecting all requirements from each district. Some districts had more difficult requirements than others. Some districts required less of their students. After classifying all requirements, it was discovered by the writer that all twelve districts had certain reading requirements in common. These mutual requirements fell into the four aforementioned categories. The consensus was that students must demonstrate competencies in those four categories.

Practical Skills Versus Learned Skills

When the interviewees were asked if their districts favored the practical/application skills over the learned skills, nine (75 percent) said they favored both application skills and learned skills. Students are taught certain learned skills and then asked to apply those skills to practical situations in order to demonstrate that they have truly learned them. One (8 percent) district said it favored the practical skills in its test only and one

district said that it would be testing for traditional kinds of skills, which meant that the district favored the learned skills. The consensus for this question was that the districts favored both application skills and learned skills. Reading, writing and math skills will be taught to the students. In the actual competency examination, students will be asked to demonstrate a knowledge of those basic skills, as well as a knowledge of how to use those basic skills in a practical situation.

Selection of Competencies

In describing the steps to selecting the competencies, nine (75 percent) districts arranged to have the main committee meet first, select competencies by rating them in order of importance and then give the list to a second committee for comments and revision. The main committee had a second opportunity to change the competencies after they had been reviewed by the parent committee and then submitted the final list to the board for approval. After the entire minimal competency requirements were approved by the board, the competencies were field-tested by a large group of students and any final revisions that needed to be done were made at that time. Two (18 percent) districts had parents, students and teachers serve on the main committee. After competencies were selected, they were taken back to individual schools for comments and suggestions by teachers and then taken back to the main

committee for final revisions and then to the board for final approval. One (8 percent) district had the curriculum consultants select the competencies after visiting all the schools and getting ideas from teachers. The consultants made several visits to the schools and asked the teachers to express their opinions about competencies that had already been selected. The competencies were then submitted to the board for approval. The consensus, in this important question, was that districts had the main committee meet first, select competencies and then give the list to the parent committee for comments and revisions. Teachers on the committee also went back to their schools to get suggestions and comments from fellow teachers at their school. The main committee had a second opportunity (and in some cases a third) to change the competencies after they had been reviewed by the parent committee and then submitted the final list to the board for approval.

Criteria for Passing Math Competencies

The interviewees were asked what will be used as a criterion to show that the student has passed competencies in math. All districts replied that the student must demonstrate knowledge in the categories of whole numbers, fractions, decimals, percentages, conversions, place value, rounding off numbers, graphs, measurements and problem solving. In the area of whole numbers, all

twelve districts required that the student be able to add, subtract, multiply and divide accurately. In the area of fractions, all districts stated that students must be able to add, subtract, multiply and divide fractions properly. In the area of decimals, all districts required that the students be able to add, subtract, multiply and divide decimals. In the area of percentages, all districts required that students be able to find percents of given numbers. In the area of conversions, all districts felt that students must be able to convert decimals into fractions, fractions into decimals, decimals into percentages, percentages into decimals, fractions into percentages, percentages into fractions. In the area of place value, districts required students to identify place value in any mixed number. In the area of rounding off numbers, all districts replied that students must demonstrate that they can round numbers off to the nearest 10, 100, 1000, 10,000 and 100,000. In the area of graphs, districts required students to be able to read and show that they understand certain simple graphs. In the area of measurements, all districts stated that students must show they have an understanding of the metric system and be able to measure perimeter, area and volume. They should also be able to recognize certain simple geometric figures and have an understanding of weight mass. In the area of problem solving, all districts felt that students should be able to understand various cash transactions and should

demonstrate they can fill out an income tax form, write a check, keep a budget and understand rate of interest. A consensus was made of all categories when the researcher collected all math requirements from each district. Some districts had more difficult requirements than others. Some districts required less from their students. After classifying all requirements, it was discovered by the writer that all twelve districts had certain math requirements in common. These mutual requirements fell into the categories mentioned above. The consensus was that students must demonstrate competencies in those categories.

Number of Times Students May Take the Test

When asked how many times a student may be able to take the test over again if he fails it, nine (75 percent) districts stated that a student would be given the opportunity of taking the test two times each year that he is in high school. Once he passes the test, he will not have to take it again. Three (25 percent) districts said that the student may take the test as many times as he needs to in order to pass the test. The consensus for this question was that a student would be able to take the competency test two times each year that he is in high school.

Repeating the Test

When asked if students will be required to take the entire test over again if they do not pass, nine (75 percent) interviewees replied that the student will only have

to take the particular competency he has missed over again. If he does not pass the reading competency, he will have to take the entire reading competency exam again. Three (25 percent) interviewees said that a student would only have to take the specific section of the reading competency over again and not the entire reading competency. The consensus was that if students fail a particular reading competency, they will have to take the entire reading competency test over again. If students fail a specific math competency, they will have to take the entire math competency test over again.

Competencies Below the Eighth Grade

When asked if there will be certain checkpoints in the student's career below the eighth grade where he or she must pass certain competencies in order to go on to the next grade, ten (83 percent) districts said that proficiencies were being developed for students in the third, sixth and seventh grades. However, all twelve districts replied that no district policy had been passed by the board which stated that students not passing those competencies would be held back from the next grade. The consensus was the proficiencies were being developed for every grade starting with the first grade and going into high school. The interviewees indicated, however, that the purpose of developing these competencies was not to prevent children from being promoted from grade to grade.

The main purpose of developing competencies for every grade was to help the schools become aware of individuals who were having difficulties with the basic subjects so that remedial procedures could be established.

Criteria for Passing Writing Competencies

When asked what the criteria would be to show that students had passed competencies in writing, all districts replied that the student must demonstrate knowledge of spelling, capitalization, punctuation and grammar. In addition, the student must show that he can write a logical composition or paper. While districts differed in the various forms they wanted their students to be able to fill out, all districts required students to be able to understand and fill out forms such as job applications, etc. Most districts will require that students write a composition expressing a certain opinion or relating a personal experience. All districts will grade the papers using a holistic approach meaning that in addition to grading students on correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation and grammar, all students' papers will be graded on content as well. Students will have to demonstrate they can write a well-organized paper, stick to the main point of the paper, use specific examples and show logical thinking.

A consensus was made of all categories by collecting all requirements from each district. After classifying all requirements, it was discovered by the writer that all

twelve districts had certain writing requirements in common. These mutual requirements fell into the categories mentioned above. The consensus was that students must demonstrate competencies in writing in those competencies.

Procedures for Transfer Students

Interviewees were asked what will happen to students who transfer into the school district. Nine (75 percent) districts stated that if a student transfers into the school district in the twelfth grade and has already passed the competency test, he will not have to take another test. If a student transfers into the district below the twelfth grade, he will have to take the test even though he has taken one in another school. One (8 percent) district replied that if a student transfers into the district and has already passed a competency exam in another district, he will not have to take the exam no matter what grade he is in. One district said that when a student transfers into the district, he will have to take the exam even though he has passed it in his former district. The consensus for this question was that if a student transfers into the school district in the twelfth grade and has already passed the competency test, he will not have to take another test. If a student transfers into the district below the twelfth grade, however, he will have to take the test even though he has taken one in another school.

Selection of Measurement Instruments

When asked what measurement instruments would be used to measure students in reading, three (25 percent) districts indicated that they would be using commercial tests. One district would be using Harper Row Mastery Test Series; one district would be using a test published by McGraw-Hill; and one district would be using the California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) as a measurement instrument. Nine (75 percent) districts stated that they would be using teacher selected materials such as newspaper articles, magazine articles and paragraphs written by teachers. The consensus for this question was that the districts would be using teacher selected materials such as newspapers, magazine articles and paragraphs written by teachers. Teachers selected these materials in a subjective manner. The districts felt quite strongly that it was imperative that their own teachers construct the tests because the teachers had a much better knowledge of what their own students were capable of doing than did any commercial test.

Instruments to Measure Math

When asked what measurement instruments would be used to measure students in math, eleven (92 percent) said that the test items would be constructed by teachers in the district. One (8 percent) district replied that it would be using items constructed by ETS (Educational

Testing Service). The consensus for this question is that test items would be made by individual teachers in the district.

Instruments to Measure Writing

When asked what measurement instruments would be used to measure students in writing, all twelve districts replied that writing tests would be constructed by teachers in the district. Students would be given certain themes on which they could write. After a student has chosen a certain theme, he or she must write a composition. The composition must be logical and well organized. In addition, the student must use correct spelling, proper capitalization, punctuation and grammar. While themes differed from district to district, most districts required that students express an opinion on a certain subject or relate a personal experience. All districts agreed that having the student actually write paragraphs was essential in order to pass the writing competency requirements.

Rationale for Selecting Specific Measurement Instrument in Reading

The district using the Harper Row System stated that it had the best methods of measuring the students' progress. The management system measured everything the teachers felt was important. The district using the CTBS felt that the items tested were on a par with what the students had been learning in class. The district using

SHARP (McGraw-Hill) also felt the items in the test measured what teachers felt was important. The remaining nine (75 percent) districts felt that in order to function in a society, students would have to know how to read certain forms and articles. The committee members asked themselves, "In reading, what do we expect all high school graduates to be able to accomplish in order to get along in life?" The consensus for this question was that the districts felt students ought to be able to read certain forms and articles in order to get along in life.

Rationale for Selecting Specific Measurements in Math

The district using the Educational Testing Service decided it would be the best instrument to measure what the students had been learning. The remaining eleven (92 percent) districts felt that students should be able to work and understand certain processes in math in order to graduate from high school and in order to get along in life. The teachers asked themselves, "What does a student need to know in math in order to function properly in society after graduation?" The consensus was that the districts felt that students should be able to do certain specific processes in order to graduate from high school. Teachers felt if students could demonstrate they had exhibited competencies in the areas of whole numbers, fractions, decimals, percentages, conversions, place value, rounding off numbers, graphs, measurements and problem

solving and if the students could show they could use those processes in practical situations, they would be able to function well in society after graduation.

Rationale for Selecting Specific Measurement Instrument in Writing

All twelve districts were of the opinion that in order to get along in life, students must show they can write well-organized paragraphs that stick to the main point and exhibit correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. All twelve districts felt strongly that in order to demonstrate writing competencies, students must actually write complete paragraphs. Therefore, the measurement instrument is the student's individual written paragraph.

Implementing Minimal Competencies

Respondents were asked how teachers were informed about the minimal competencies that had been established in the district and how they were to be implemented. All twelve districts replied that because teachers had been involved in either writing or revising the competencies from the beginning, they already knew about the requirements. All twelve districts also replied that inservice workshops concerning implementing the competencies were held during the year. The main point all districts stressed when answering this question was that teachers and staff had known about minimal competencies from the time committees first started working on them. Staff

members were informed, through representatives, on the progress of the committee and were allowed to make suggestions and revisions throughout the year. After comments and revisions had been made by staff members and committee members and after field-testing of the selected competencies had been accomplished, the final competency requirements were recommended to the board for approval and then implemented in the district.

Main Ideas Discussed at Inservice Meetings

When asked what main ideas were discussed during inservice meetings, ten (92 percent) districts stated that they wanted the teachers to understand they had a definite responsibility to teach the competencies that had been selected. Districts also wanted the teachers to know that they were responsible for keeping careful records of their students. One (8 percent) district felt that the most important thing for the teachers to understand was the legal implications of the Hart Bill. One district thought that letting the teachers know how the tests would be graded was the most important. The overwhelming consensus for this question was that the districts wanted to instill in their teachers a sense of responsibility--a responsibility for teaching the required competencies and keeping the necessary records. Cooperation and teamwork was the theme for all inservice workshops. In order to make the minimal competency program work effectively, the district

had to get across to the teachers that they were an intricate and essential part of the process.

Individual School Workshops

When asked how often workshops were held during regular faculty meetings with the school principal presiding, three (25 percent) districts replied that meetings were held outside the individual schools at the district level. The Director of Curriculum or the Curriculum Specialist presided at the district level meetings. The consensus for this question was that individual workshops were held during regular faculty meetings with the school principal presiding. Interviewees felt that discussing the implementation of competencies at faculty meetings actually strengthened the meetings. They brought faculty members together by establishing mutual goals and objectives for the year.

Materials Needed to Implement Competencies

When asked what extra materials were needed to implement the competencies, nine (75 percent) districts stated that money was mainly needed for paying substitutes when teachers were released for attending meetings and correcting test items. Three (25 percent) districts indicated that in addition to spending money for substitutes, a large proportion of money was spent for commercial test items. All districts said that materials were mainly purchased for remedial instruction. This area, according

to interviewees, was one of great concern. The consensus was that the majority of money will need to go to paying substitutes when teachers are released for attending meetings and correcting tests. Without releasing teachers, all twelve districts felt that the minimal competency program will prove to be ineffective. In addition, all districts felt that materials must be purchased for remedial instruction. It will do no good, claimed interviewees, if remedial students are identified through the competency tests and then are not properly helped through individualized instruction. In order to have this needed individualized instruction, there must be funds available.

Student Remediation Procedures

Respondents were asked to describe procedures that will take place when a student does not exhibit the required competencies. All twelve districts replied that arrangements will be immediately made for a conference between the teacher, parent, student and counselor. At the conference, remediation procedures will be carefully planned in writing. It will be decided at that time, how many periods a day the student will be attending a competency lab and which remediation materials he will be needing in order to pass specific competency examinations.

Remediation Activities Provided to Students

When asked what kinds of remediation will be

provided to students who do not meet the required competencies, eleven (92 percent) districts replied that a competency lab or learning center will be established at every high school in the district. One (8 percent) district stated it will provide a main child-study center which will be located at the district office. Arrangements will be made for all remedial students to attend these learning labs on an individual basis. The consensus for this question was that competency labs or learning centers will be established at each high school for the purpose of helping all students who have failed parts of the competency test. Some interviewees stressed that their budget did not allow for hiring an extra teacher to work in the lab. Therefore, principals will arrange class schedules so that a teacher from the regular staff will work with remedial students. This means that class sizes will be larger in regular classes but administrators feel there is nothing else that can be done.

Time Allotted to Students Attending Competency Labs

When asked how much of the school day will be taken up with remedial help, all twelve districts replied that the average remedial student will attend one lab class per day (in lieu of a regular class period). In some cases a student might attend two classes per day if he were in need of help in several competencies. If a student does not need to attend a full period of lab classes, he can meet

with remedial teachers before or after school for a short period of time. Ten (83 percent) districts stated that a teacher from the regular staff will be assigned as a remedial teacher. Two (17 percent) districts replied that they will employ a full-time special education teacher to work with the remedial students. The consensus for this question was that a teacher from the regular staff will be assigned as a remedial teacher.

Learning Disabled Children

The respondents were asked how the children who were diagnosed as learning disabled will be accommodated. Eleven (92 percent) respondents indicated they will use differential standards when testing learning disabled students. The special education teacher, with the school appraisal team, will set the standards of competency for each student, depending on his individual disability. The student will be given individual tests according to his or her capabilities. One (8 percent) district stated that if the learning disabled students have achieved all objectives on their individual educational program for two years, it will be considered they have met the competency requirements of the district. The consensus for this question was that differential standards will be used when testing learning disabled students based on recommendations from the special education teacher and the school appraisal team.

Bilingual or Limited English Speaking Children

When asked how limited English speaking children will be accommodated, all districts indicated that this was the most difficult problem in complying with the Hart Bill. Nine (75 percent) districts stated that there would be no differential standards and that all students, including students of limited English speaking ability would have to take the test in English. One (8 percent) district stated that if students arrive in the district in the twelfth grade and are limited in speaking English, they will be excused from the competency exam. Below the twelfth grade, however, they will have to take the exam in English. Two (17 percent) districts said that students identified as limited English speaking students will be excluded from the competency exam and some other form of test will be substituted. All districts interviewed indicated they had an active ESL program and were making great efforts to increase its effectiveness. The consensus for this question was that there will be no differential standards for limited English speaking children.

Handicapped Children

All twelve districts indicated that the handicapped students would be required to take the competency examination along with all the other students. However, the districts indicated they would give special help to those students needing help. Tests with enlarged printing would

be given to the visually handicapped students, special provisions would be made for orthopedically handicapped children and other special provisions would be made for handicapped children according to their needs.

Administrators' Opinions concerning the Hart Bill

All interviewees were asked their personal opinion of the Hart Bill. The (83 percent) interviewees expressed overwhelming approval of the bill. They felt it would prove to be extremely beneficial to education. Two (16 percent) administrators had several serious reservations about the Hart Bill. The consensus for this question was that interviewees approved of the Hart Bill quite strongly. Remarks made by the interviewees concerning the Hart Bill can be found in the appendix of this study.

Summary

This chapter has discussed, in detail, the collected data of the study. After the data were collected from the selected school districts, the writer classified response from all districts and then arranged them into common categories.

In the selection of committee personnel the general agreement among the interviewees was that the main working committee consisted of teacher representatives and the Director of Curriculum. When choosing committees, the consensus was that the principals chose the members to

serve on the main working committee. In choosing the chairman of the committee, the general agreement among the twelve districts was that the chairman of the main committee was selected by the superintendent of the district. In dividing committee members into subcommittees, the consensus was that the main committee divided into subcommittees at the beginning of each meeting and met later as the main committee. When asked the ideal length of each meeting, the consensus was that half-day sessions of three hours would be the most effective period of time. On the question of ideal time for meetings, districts agreed that the meetings should be held in the afternoon session. When asked the total time taken to select and establish minimal competencies, the consensus of opinion was that at least one year is needed in order to do an effective job. In describing the greatest problems encountered during committee meetings, the consensus said that the most difficult problem was coming to a general agreement on which competencies were the most important. The consensus for the question of what the role of the committee chairman should be indicated that he should be a facilitator and that he must outline, clearly, what needs to be done, what are the main issues and what are the expectations of the committee. When asked what methods were used to avoid conflicts at meetings the consensus was that all committee members should be asked to rank the competencies in order of their importance. In this way no committee member's

suggestions are ignored. When asked if the community was given an opportunity to express their opinions, the consensus was that parents were given a chance to express their opinions after the competencies had been selected by the main committee. When asked what the main problems were at committee meetings, the agreement was that the parents were mostly concerned over whether standards were set high enough. The main activity of the parent committee, according to the consensus of opinions, was to discuss and rank competencies that had already been selected by the main committee and then to revise them, if necessary. When asked if students were involved in the selection of competencies, the consensus was that students were chosen by their student councils to attend and participate in the parent committee meetings.

When asked which competencies students had to pass in order to graduate, the consensus was that students must exhibit competencies in reading, writing and computation. When asked what grade level a student was expected to read before graduating from high school, the consensus of the twelve school districts was that no grade level was specified. In establishing criteria for passing the reading competencies, the consensus was that students must demonstrate knowledge in the categories of: (1) word meaning; (2) structural analysis; (3) comprehension; and (4) study skills. When asked if districts favored practical skills or learned skills, the consensus was that the

districts favored both application skills and learned skills. When asked how districts actually selected competencies, the consensus was that districts had the main committee meet first, select competencies and then give the list to the parent committee for comments and revisions. Teachers on the committee also went back to their schools to get suggestions and comments from fellow teachers at their school. The main committee had a second opportunity to change the competencies after they had been reviewed by the parent committee and then submitted the final list to the board for approval. In establishing criteria for passing the math competencies, the consensus was that students must demonstrate knowledge in the categories of whole numbers, fractions, decimals, percentages, conversions, place value, rounding off numbers, graphs, measurements and problem solving. When asked how many times a student may take the competency exam, the general agreement was that he will be able to take the competency test two times each year that he is in high school. If the student fails the test, the consensus for this question was that he will have to take the entire competency test over again. In discussing the criteria for passing the writing competencies, the consensus was that the student must demonstrate knowledge of spelling, capitalization, punctuation and grammar. In addition, the student must show that he can write a logical composition or paper. He must show that he can stick to the main point of his paper,

use specific examples and show logical thinking. When asked what would happen to students coming into the school district, the consensus was that if a student transfers into the school district in the twelfth grade and has already passed the competency test, he will not have to take another test. If a student transfers into the district below the twelfth grade, however, he will have to take the test even though he has taken one in another school.

When asked what measurement instruments would be used to measure students in reading, the consensus was that the districts would be using teacher-selected materials such as newspapers, magazine articles and paragraphs written by teachers. When asked what measurement instruments would be used to measure students in math, the consensus for this question was that test items would be made by individual teachers in the district. When asked what measurement instruments would be used to measure students in writing, the consensus for this question was that themes would be suggested by teachers. Students would then write compositions pertaining to those themes. In choosing the rationale for selecting measurement instruments in reading, the consensus for this question was that the districts felt students ought to be able to read certain forms and articles in order to get along in life. In choosing the rationale for selecting measurement instruments in math, the consensus was that

the districts felt that students should be able to do certain specific processes in order to graduate from high school and get along in life. In choosing the rationale for selecting measurement instruments in writing, the consensus was that the districts felt the student should be able to express himself logically and be able to use correct spelling and grammar in order to get along in life.

When asked how teachers were informed about the minimal competencies the consensus was that all districts had involved their teachers in the selection process from the beginning and therefore no staff members were surprised when competencies were implemented in the district. In discussing the main ideas at inservice meeting, the consensus was that the districts wanted to instill in their teachers a sense of responsibility, cooperation and teamwork. When asked what extra materials would be needed to implement the competencies, the consensus was that the majority of money will be needed to pay substitutes when teachers are released for attending meetings and correcting tests. In discussing the remediation activities provided for youngsters, the consensus was that competency labs or learning centers will be established at each high school for the purpose of helping all students who have failed part of the competency test. In discussing the matter of the learning student, the consensus was that differential standards will be used when testing learning disabled students based on recommendations from the special

education teacher and the school appraisal team. In discussing the problem of the bilingual or limited speaking child, the consensus was that there will be no differential standards for limited English speaking children. Handicapped children, however, according to the consensus, will be given differential standards for the competency exams.

The compilation of the consensual data provided the basis for a model to select and establish minimal competencies. This model can be found in Chapter 5 of this study.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, MODEL, RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is organized into three sections. The first section of this chapter contains a summary of the previous chapters. The second section contains the model to establish and implement minimal competencies in California unified school districts. The final section of the chapter contains implications for further study.

Summary of the Study

The problem of the study was presented in Chapter 1: The new law has obliged districts to spell out clearly a plan to develop just what competencies would be accepted as minimal for high school graduation. In brief, the local district has to (1) identify, but not necessarily limit itself to, minimal competencies in communication and computation, (2) decide on the minimal acceptable levels of student performance in those competencies, and (3) create a manageable measurement process interfaced with those competencies. One of the major problems facing California school districts concerning minimal competencies is one of establishing the requirements within the prescribed time frame indicated by the Hart Bill, which is 1980. A district in the process of implementing this law faces considerable

logistical and organizational problems.

The purpose of this study was to provide a model for California unified school districts to establish and implement a program of minimal competencies and to provide added direction, guidance and support to those districts that have already adopted such a program. The model was based on a censensus of selected unified school districts throughout California comprising 25 percent of the State's pupil population. It sought to establish a step-by-step process which any school district could follow.

The following assumptions were stated in Chapter 1 concerning this study:

1. There is no widely accepted, recognized model for implementing or identifying minimal competencies in California unified school districts.
2. Personnel within a unified school district want to know what other unified school districts throughout California are doing to identify and implement minimal competencies.
3. The board of education is the unit primarily responsible for the identification and implementation of minimal competencies but relies heavily on recommendations from the superintendent.
4. Identification and implementation of minimal competency testing must be carefully planned.

The selection of data from this study indicates that the assumptions are well-founded. Each interviewee replied that, as yet, no widely accepted model had been implemented or identified for use in a California school district. Furthermore, all of those interviewed agreed that such a model would be helpful. All school district

personnel also acknowledged to the researcher that it would be very helpful to know what other unified school districts are doing to identify and establish competencies. The assumption that proper identification and implementation of minimal competency testing must be carefully planned also proved to be well-founded. Each person interviewed indicated that proper planning was essential to the success of the minimal competency program and without it, effective implementation could not take place. The assumption that the board of education is the unit primarily responsible for implementing minimal competencies but relied heavily on the superintendent was also confirmed by the interviewees. In each district, the board had charged the superintendent with making recommendations for establishing competencies. The board relied heavily on the superintendent's judgment, organizational skills and educational expertise.

In Chapter 2 of this study, an extensive review of the literature relating to (1) accountability, (2) basic education, and (3) minimal competencies was presented. The writer showed the relationship between these three areas by pointing out that accountability had already become the new slogan in the classrooms across the nation. As accountability procedures were included in school programs, it became clear to parents that students at the various levels were not meeting reasonable academic standards. As a result of test scores declining especially

in reading, writing and computation, people began calling for more basic education in the schools. To simply stress the basic skills, however, was not enough. There was a need not only to teach basic skills but also to test them in order to make sure they had been taught properly. Numerous states began passing minimal competency laws because of this need and because of demands made on educators. Such laws stated that students had to pass certain reading, writing and computational skills in order to graduate from high school; hence, minimal competencies identification and implementation became the overriding issue in many school districts throughout the entire country.

Chapter 3 described the methodology of the study. The interview was the principal method used for collecting data for this study. The interview instrument was presented to administrators in twelve unified school districts throughout California. After the data were collected, the writer classified responses from all districts. Since each interviewee had been asked basically the same questions, it was possible to make a summary of the responses. The writer constructed the model by taking a consensus of all districts interviewed. If 75 percent of all districts agreed in methods and procedures, the writer included them into the model.

Chapter 4 contained the results of the study. The first section of this chapter contained an analysis of each

question asked in the interview. The writer made the analysis by classifying responses from all districts and then arranging them into common categories. In all questions but two there was a consensus of agreement from all twelve districts. The compilation of the consensual data provided the basis for a model to select and establish minimal competencies in California unified school districts.

Chapter 5 contains the actual model. This model for the selection and establishment of minimal competencies in California unified school districts has been developed for use by administrators and staff personnel in individual school districts. The researcher realized that individual school districts differ in the following ways: (1) size of the school districts, (2) philosophy of the school districts, (3) facilities of the school districts, (4) the composition of the community that comprises the school district, (5) individual personalities of staff personnel, (6) economic resources of the community, (7) culture of the community, (8) political beliefs, and (9) the individual abilities of students.

Each school district may have a curriculum that is unique. There are, however, many areas that are common to all school districts. This model addresses itself to basic similarities. The writer maintains that if school district personnel follow the steps of the model, they will be able to select and establish minimal competencies effectively.

THE CONSENSUS MODEL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MINIMAL COMPETENCIES IN CALIFORNIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICTS

I. Selection of Committee Personnel

A. The Superintendent of Schools Meets with Director of Curriculum. (If there is no position of Director of Curriculum in the district, the superintendent will coordinate directly with the principals)

1. Reviews background and requirements of A.B. 3408

2. Discusses time-line expectations and responsibilities

3. Assigns the job of Committee Chairman for selecting minimal competencies

B. The Director of Curriculum Meets with Building Principals

1. Reviews background and requirements of A.B. 3408 with principals

2. Directs that main working committee will consist of teacher-representatives from each school

3. Directs that teacher representatives will be chosen by building principals

4. Directs that there will be three teachers from each school on the committee

a. one teacher representative from the language arts department with a specialty in reading

b. one teacher representative from the language arts department with a specialty in writing

c. one teacher representative from the math department

C. The Director of Curriculum Meets with Minimal Competency Committee

1. During the first hour, all members meet with with the committee as a whole

a. background and requirements of A.B. 3408 are discussed

b. time-line expectations and responsibilities are discussed

c. specific goals and objectives are discussed

d. specific strategies and tasks are delineated

e. specific terms are defined

f. the length and time of meetings are discussed

1) meetings will be held in half-day sessions

2) each meeting will last approximately three hours

3) meetings will be held in the afternoon

4) teachers will be given released time to attend meetings

5) the selection and establishment of minimal competencies will be completed and ready for board approval within one year of the initial meeting

2. During the second hour, all members meet in subcommittees

a. language arts teachers with specialty in reading meet together to discuss reading competencies, in general

b. language arts teachers with specialty in writing meet together to discuss writing competencies, in general

c. math teachers meet together to discuss math competencies

3. During the third and last hour, all members meet once again with the committee as a whole

a. all members are asked to suggest competencies for all three areas (reading, writing, computation)

b. all suggested competencies are listed, none are ignored

c. all members are asked to rate suggested competencies in order of their importance

d. meeting is adjourned after all members are told when next meeting will be held and what the specific activities will be

D. Organizational Patterns of the Committee Meetings

1. The Director of Curriculum is Chairman of the Committee and has specific responsibilities at the meeting

a. must act as facilitator at each meeting (listen, reiterate, put in perspective each member's comments)

b. must make sure everyone on committee has opportunity to express opinion

c. must make sure members of the committee keep to the main topic of minimal competencies

d. must not, in any way, dominate the meeting with his presence

e. must continually delineate what needs to be accomplished

f. must continually define and clarify issues

g. must keep all members actively involved and interested in the process of selecting and establishing competencies

2. Each committee member has specific responsibilities at the meeting

a. must attend meetings regularly and punctually

b. must take an active part in discussion

c. must report back to their own schools what has taken place at the main meeting

d. must receive feedback from own faculty members and bring those ideas back to the main committee at next meeting

e. must use good judgment, experience and common sense when rating competencies according to their importance

E. The Director of Curriculum Meets with Parent Organization

1. Reviews background and requirements of A.B. 3408 with parents

2. Reviews competencies that have been selected by teacher representatives at main working committee

3. Defines and clarifies issues

4. Delineates what needs to be accomplished

5. Asks parents to revise selected competencies, add their own competencies, subtract competencies they do not approve of

6. Sets the schedule for the next meeting

7. Outlines specific activities to take place at the next meeting

(It should be noted that all interviewees stressed that parent involvement in the selection process was essential. If minimal competencies are to reflect attitudes of the community, there must be input from individual citizens of that community. Hence, Organizational Patterns of the Parent Committee and Comments Concerning Parent Meetings are included in this model.)

F. Organizational Patterns of the Parent Committee

1. The Director of Curriculum acts as advisor to the committee

2. Members of the parent committee are volunteers

3. A chairman is selected by members of the committee

4. Parent meetings are open and any member of the community may attend and participate

5. Parent committee meets on a monthly basis

6. The main activity of parents during their meetings is to revise, discuss and review competencies that have already been selected by teacher representatives at the main working committee

7. Like the teacher representatives, parents are asked to rank competencies (already selected by teacher representatives) in order of their importance

8. Two students chosen from the student council at each school attend the parent committee meeting and take part in discussion, revision of competencies, and ranking competencies in order of their importance

   a. students must report back to their own schools what has taken place at the parent meeting

   b. students must receive feedback from the school student council and bring those ideas back to the parent committee meeting

G. Comments Concerning Parent and Teacher-Representative Committee Meetings

1. After the main working committee (consisting of teacher-representatives) selected minimal competencies, the list of competencies is given to the parent committee for revision and review

2. Parent committee revises and, in some cases changes competencies and sends the list back to the main working committee

3. Teacher-representatives also report back to their schools to get suggestions and comments from their peers

4. The main working committee, after receiving revisions from the parent committee, again disucsses and ranks competencies in order of their importance

5. Final revisions are submitted to the board for approval

6. Minimal competency test items are field-tested on student-body

II. Selection of Minimal Competencies

A. The Selection of Minimal Competencies in Reading (It is advisable not to attach grade equivalents to reading competencies but it is recognized that the competencies listed below may fall into a particular grade equivalency.)

1. No grade level for reading competencies is specified by the committee

a. too much conflict from the community when grade levels are specified

b. the district runs the risk of alienating some of the community

2. All students must demonstrate knowledge in four categories

a. students must demonstrate knowledge in the area of word meaning

1) students must be able to recognize specific words within a context

2) students must be able to use specific words within a context

b. students must demonstrate knowledge in the area of structural analysis

1) students must be able to recognize beginning and ending letters

2) students must be able to recognize suffixes, prefixes

3) students must be able to recognize compound words

4) students must be able to recognize synonyms, homonyms and antonyms

5) students must be able to recognize all vowel sounds

6) students must be able to recognize syllables in a word

7) students must be able to recognize plural and singular words

8) students must be able to recognize possessives

9) students must be able to recognize contractions

10) students must be able to recognize root words

c. students must demonstrate knowledge in the area of comprehension

1) students must identify the main idea of selected reading materials

2) students must be able to summarize what they have read

3) students must be able to paraphrase what they have read

4) students must be able to analyze what they have read

5) students must be able to distinguish the irrelevant from the relevant (according to the reading teacher)

6) students must be able to distinguish between statements of fact and statements of opinion

d. students must demonstrate knowledge in the area of study skills

1) students must demonstrate knowledge in alphabetizing

2) students must demonstrate knowledge in using the encyclopedia

3) students must demonstrate knowledge in using the dictionary

4) students must demonstrate knowledge in using the card catalogue

5) students must show they are familiar with library procedures

6) students must show they are able to read maps with accuracy

7) students must demonstrate knowledge in using a table of contents

B. The Selection of Minimal Competencies in Math

1. No grade level for math competencies is specified

2. All students must demonstrate knowledge in ten categories

a. students must demonstrate knowledge in the area of whole numbers

1) students must be able to add, subtract, multiply and divide whole numbers

b. students must demonstrate knowledge in the area of fractions

1) students must be able to add, subtract, multiply and divide fractions

2) students must be able to reduce fractions to their lowest common denominator

c. students must demonstrate knowledge in the area of decimals

1) students must be able to add, subtract, multiply and divide decimals

2) students must demonstrate they can use decimals in practical situations

d. students must demonstrate knowledge in the area of percentages

1) students must be able to find percents of given numbers

2) students must show they can use percentages in practical situations

e. students must demonstrate knowledge in the area of conversions

1) students must be able to convert decimals into fractions

2) students must be able to convert fractions into decimals

3) students must be able to convert decimals into percentages

4) students must be able to convert percentages into decimals

5) students must be able to convert fractions into percentages

6) students must be able to convert percentages into fractions

f. students must demonstrate knowledge in the area of place value

1) students must be able to identify place value in any mixed number

2) students must be able to identify place value in any number up to seven figures

g. students must demonstrate knowledge in the area of rounding off numbers

1) students must demonstrate they can round number off to the nearest 10, 100, 1000, 10,000 and 100,000.

2) students must show they can use rounding off in practical situations

h. students must demonstrate knowledge in the area of graphs

1) students must be able to read simple selected graphs

2) students must show they can use graphs in certain practical situations

i. students must demonstrate knowledge in the area of measurements

1) students must demonstrate they have an understanding of the metric system

2) students must show they can measure perimeter, area and volume

3) students must show they can recognize certain simple geometric figures

4) students must show they have an understanding of weight mass

j. students must demonstrate knowledge in the area of problem solving

1) students must show they understand various cash transactions

2) students must demonstrate they can fill out an income tax form

3) students must demonstrate they can write a check

4) students must demonstrate they can keep a proper budget

5) students must understand rate of interest and show how it is used

C. The Selection of Minimal Competencies in Writing

1. No grade level for writing competencies is specified

2. All students must demonstrate they can write a logical composition on paper (as judged by the teacher)

3. Students must demonstrate they have a knowledge of spelling, punctuation, capitalization and grammar

4. Students must demonstrate they can write a well-organized paper, stick to the point and use specific examples (as judged by the teacher)

5. Students must demonstrate they can write resumes, job applications

III. Selection of Measurement Instruments

A. The Selection of Measurement Instruments in Reading (If a district uses norm-referenced instruments, it should be aware of the population characteristics on which the test was normed. If the district uses criterion-referenced instruments it should endeavor to validate the instruments and to make them reliable.)

1. Instruments to measure reading competencies are developed by teachers on the reading competency committee

   a. teachers write and develop paragraphs which will be meaningful to the students

   b. teachers write and develop sentences which have specific vocabulary words which students must understand

2. Instruments to measure reading competencies are selected by teachers on the reading competency committee

   a. teachers select certain newspaper articles

   b. teachers select certain magazine articles

B. The Selection of Measurement Instruments in Math

1. Instruments to measure math competencies are developed by teachers on the math competency committee

   a. teachers write math problems which will include the ten areas a student needs to master in order to pass the math competencies

   b. teachers develop word problems to ensure that students can apply the various processes to life situations

2. Instruments to measure math competencies are selected by teachers on the math competency committee

   a. teachers select various forms that students must fill out such as income tax forms, budget and checkbook

   b. teachers select forms that will determine if students can understand rate of interest

C. The Selection of Measurement Instruments in Writing

1. Instruments to measure writing competencies are developed by teachers on the writing competency committee

a. students are asked to write a composition that shows logic, organization and proper spelling, capitalization, punctuation and grammar

b. teachers develop ideas on what students should write about and give suggested titles

c. teachers grade papers based on writing ability and proper grammar and punctuation

IV. Implementing Minimal Competencies

A. Committee Representatives Meet with School Staff

1. Reviews background and requirements of A.B. 3408

2. Reviews what has been discussed at main meetings

3. Reviews minimal competencies that have been selected by the main committee members

4. Requests teachers to discuss, revise and add competencies of their own

B. Committee Representatives Meet with Main Committee

1. Discusses suggestions and revisions made by individual school staffs

2. Refines and revises minimal competencies already selected

C. Building Principals Meet with Staff for Inservice Workshops

1. Reviews background and requirements of A.B. 3408

2. Reviews competencies that have been selected by teacher representatives at main working committee

3. Delineates what teachers need to do

a. must understand which competencies have been selected

b. must understand that it is their responsibility to teach those competencies during the year

c. must keep accurate up-to-date records of students

4. Meets with individual school staff during the year to review progress and problems

a. inservice meetings are held during regular staff meetings

b. goals and objectives are constantly reviewed by entire staff

D. Minimal Competency Items Field-Tested on an Adequate Sample of Students

1. Items are tested for clarity and degree of difficulty

2. Minimal competency items are then revised and included into the minimal competency testing program

E. Materials Needed to Implement Competencies

1. Extra funds are needed for paying substitutes when teachers are released for attending meetings and correcting test items

2. Individualized materials are needed for remedial instruction

V. Student Remediation Procedures

A. Procedures for Students Not Exhibiting the Required Competencies

1. Conference is arranged between parents, child, teacher and counselor

a. required competencies are thoroughly delineated

b. remediation procedures are carefully planned (in writing)

1) how long the student will be attending a competency lab

2) how many periods a day the student will be attending the competency lab

3) the different kinds of remediation materials the student will be using

4) how the parents may help the student at home

2. Follow-up conference is arranged between parents, child, teacher and counselor

a. progress of the student is discussed

b. further remediation procedures, if needed, are discussed

B. Remediation Activities Provided to Students

1. A competency lab is established at each high school

a. the competency lab will be a special room in the high school large enough to house fifteen students and special materials

b. a teacher from the regular staff will act as the lab instructor

c. the competency lab teacher will help each student on an individualized basis, using special materials, games, etc.

d. a student will work on only the competency which he or she has failed to exhibit in the examination

e. the student will be responsible for completing work assigned to him in the competency lab

f. if a student is in need of special help in several competencies he or she may spend more than one period a day in the competency lab (on the average, a student will spend one period a day in the competency lab)

g. the student will attend the competency lab in lieu of his or her regular class (it will be up to counselor, teachers and student to decide which specific class will be missed)

h. careful records will be kept of each student in the competency lab

i. if the competency lab teacher is satisfied that the student can exhibit the competency in which he or she has heretofore been deficient, the student will be allowed to go back to his or her regular class

j. although the lab teacher will not be teaching to the test, (test items are not revealed to students until they actually take the competency exam) the teacher will be teaching the student specific competencies in specific areas

2. Procedures are established for students not needing labs

a. students will meet with the lab teacher before school begins

b. students will meet with the lab teacher after school

(Competency lab teachers should be cautioned that the lab is not for test taking skills but should be used as a substantive learning activity.)

C. Learning Disabled Children

1. Differential standards will be used when testing learning disabled students

a. the special education teacher will meet with the school appraisal team

b. the school appraisal team will set the standards for each student, depending on his or her individual disability

2. Students must be identified as learning disabled before differential standards can be used

D. Limited English Speaking Students

1. There will be no differential standards used for testing limited English speaking students

2. Each school will maintain an active ESL (or other bilingual education) program

   a. efforts will be made to improve the student's English before the competency test is taken

   b. efforts will be made to help limited-English speaking students become familiar with words that might be included in the competency examination

E. Exceptional Students

1. All exceptional students will be required to take the competency tests

2. Special provisions will be made to accommodate students with differing problems

   a. tests with enlarged printed will be used for students with visual problems

   b. oral tests and other special provisions will be made for students with orthopedic problems

   c. provisions will be made depending on the individual's special problem

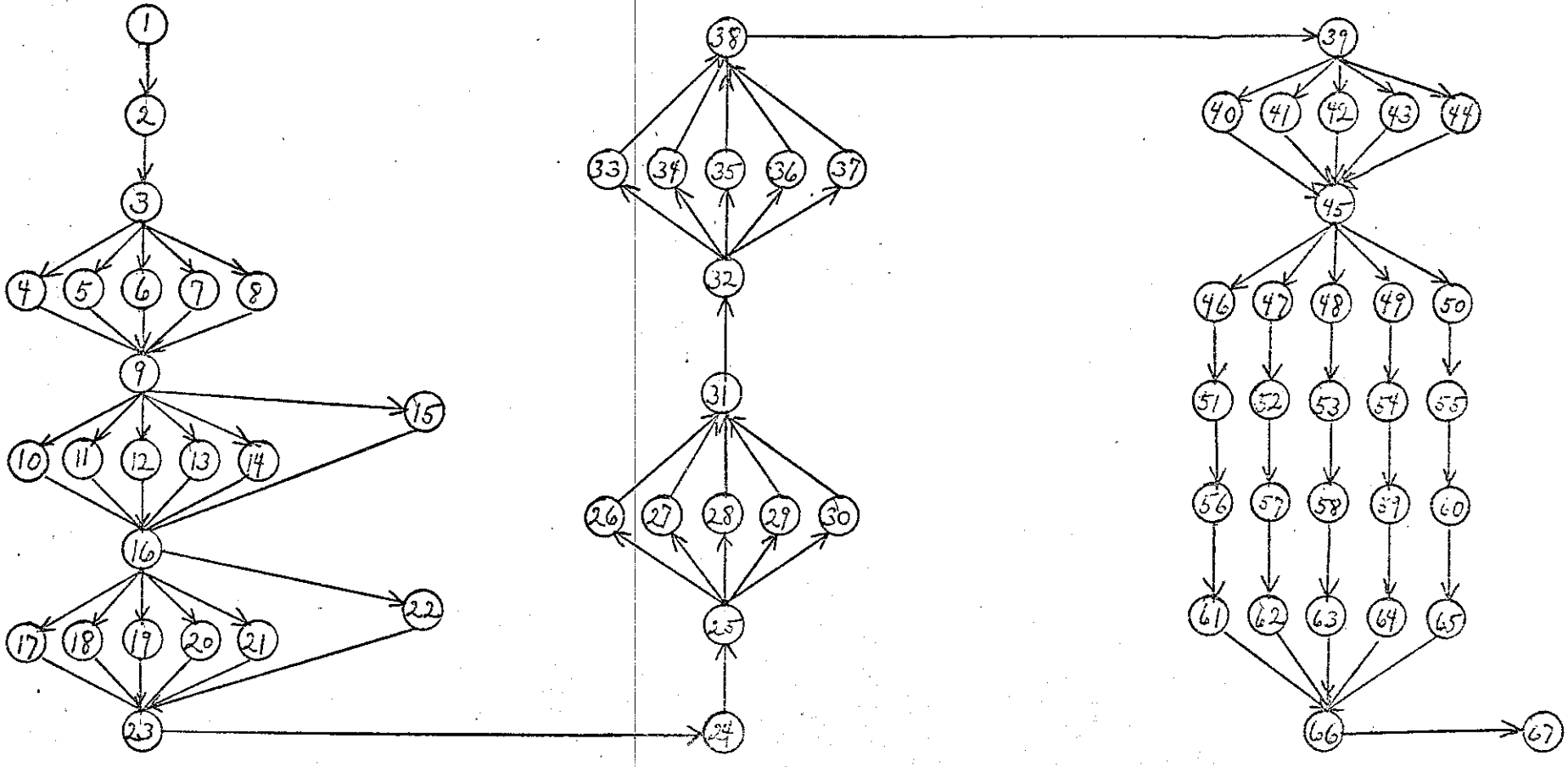
VI. Transfer Students

A. Procedures for Students Who Transfer into the School District

1. If student transfers into the school district in the 12th grade and has already passed a competency test in another district, he will not have to take another competency test

2. If a student transfers into the district below the 12th grade, he or she will have to take the test even though s/he has taken a competency test in another school district

PERT Chart of Implementation and Establishment of Minimal Competencies



In order to illustrate how minimal competencies in unified school districts were implemented and established, the researcher used a PERT (Program Evaluation and Review Technique) Chart. The chart shows the various steps school districts can take in order to complete the process of implementation.

Flow Chart of Implementation and Establishment of of Minimal Competencies

1. Begin selection and establishment of minimal competencies
2. Assign position of Committee Chairman
3. Direct principals to select committee representatives
4. Select three representatives from School A
5. Select three representatives from School B
6. Select three representatives from School C
7. Select three representatives from School D
8. Select three representatives from School D
9. Establish ground rules and select preliminary competencies
10. Revise competencies in School A
11. Revise competencies in School B
12. Revise competencies in School C
13. Revise competencies in School D
14. Revise competencies in School E
15. Revise competencies with parents
16. Refine revised competencies
17. Revise competencies in School A
18. Revise competencies in School B
19. Revise competencies in School C
20. Revise competencies in School D
21. Revise competencies in School E
22. Revise competencies with parents
23. Refine revised competencies
24. Submit to Board for approval
25. Construct test items
26. Field test in School A
27. Field test in School B
28. Field test in School C
29. Field test in School D
30. Field test in School E
31. Correct tests
32. Revise competencies
33. Conduct workshops in School A
34. Conduct workshops in School B
35. Conduct workshops in School C
36. Conduct workshops in School D
37. Conduct workshops in School E
38. Inform parents of competency tests
39. Inform Board on final tests
40. Implement tests in School A
41. Implement tests in School B
42. Implement tests in School C
43. Implement tests in School D
44. Implement tests in School E
45. Correct tests
46. Conduct parent conferences in School A
47. Conduct parent conferences in School B
48. Conduct parent conferences in School C
49. Conduct parent conferences in School D
50. Conduct parent conferences in School E
51. Establish competency labs in School A
52. Establish competency labs in School B

53. Establish competency labs in School C
54. Establish competency labs in School D
55. Establish competency labs in School E
56. Tutor students in School A
57. Tutor students in School B
58. Tutor students in School C
59. Tutor students in School D
60. Tutor students in School E
61. Retest students in School A
62. Retest students in School B
63. Retest students in School C
64. Retest students in School D
65. Retest students in School E
66. Correct tests
67. End selection and establishment of minimal competencies

Model Notes

In this model five schools are used as an example. It should be noted that the model will also work with larger school districts or smaller school districts. The processes will remain the same.

Narrative of PERT Chart

The process begins with the Board of Trustees charging the Superintendent of Schools with establishing and implementing minimal competencies in the district. The Superintendent, in turn, assigns the position of Committee Chairman to the Director of Curriculum (if the school district does not have a Director of Curriculum, the Superintendent will coordinate with the building principals). The committee chairman then meets with the building principals and directs them to select three representatives from their schools to serve on the main working committee. The representatives from each school then meet with the committee chairman in order to establish preliminary competencies. By listing specific competencies in order of their importance, the competencies are selected. Representatives then take the list of competencies back to their respective schools for discussion and revision by staff members, parents and students. The revised competencies are then taken back to the main working committee by the committee representatives for more discussion and further revision. After the main working committee members have refined the revised competencies, representatives once again take the list of competencies back to their schools for additional revision and discussion by staff, parents and students. These revised competencies are sent back to the main working committee for a final revision and then submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval. After

approval, test items are constructed and then field tested on samples of students in each school. Tests are then corrected, revised once more and arranged into the final form for testing. Before the tests are actually taken by the students, workshops are given in all schools to familiarize teachers with the tests and parents and students are informed of the coming tests. After tests have been implemented in the schools, they are corrected by staff members. If students have not exhibited certain required competencies, conferences are arranged between student, parent, teacher and counselor in order to discuss remedial help for the student. At that time it is decided if the student will need to attend a competency lab, how long he or she will need to attend and what special materials the student will need to study. When the lab teacher is satisfied the student has mastered the specific competency in which he or she was deficient, the student once again takes the competency examination. If the student exhibits the required competency, he or she will not have to take the exam again. The student will be excused from the competency lab and return to regular classes.

Implications for Further Study

The following implications for further study are presented in this section:

1. It is implied that the model developed in this study be tested in a unified school district.

2. It is implied that further models be developed after minimal competency testing is actually implemented in the schools. In the follow-up model, specific attention should be given to the following questions that could not be answered until tests were given:

   a. Since the tests have been given, have minimal competency standards been raised or lowered?

   b. Since the tests have been given, what revisions have been made in each of the three main competencies (reading, writing, computation)?

   c. Since the tests have been given, have school districts added additional competencies for students to exhibit?

   d. Since the tests have been given, what have school districts done to check their revised tests for reliability and validity?

   e. Since the tests have been given, what provisions have been made for further workshops in the school districts?

   f. Since the tests have been given, how many students in the various school districts actually failed the tests?

   g. Since the tests have been given, how effective have the competency labs been for remedial students?

   h. Since the tests have been given, how much of the budget has been allocated to teacher released time (for constructing and correcting tests)? For remedial materials? For lab teachers?

   i. What percentage of limited English speaking students have failed the test?

   j. Has there been an increase in ESL or bilingual programs since the tests have been taken?

   k. If there has been a large percentage of limited English speaking students failing the test, what does the district intend to do about it?

l. Since the tests have been taken, has there been a problem with learning disabled children taking differential tests?

m. Since the tests have been taken, what problems have exceptional students had in taking tests?

n. Has the legality of minimal-competency testing been challenged in the courts by various parents of students failing the tests? If so, what have been the results?

o. Have minimal competency tests made any difference in the attitude of youngsters attending high school?

p. Have minimal competency tests made any difference in the attitude of taxpayers in the community?

q. Have minimal competency tests made any difference in the attitude of teachers (in the way teachers teach)?

Chapter Summary

It was the researcher's intention to provide a consensus model for California unified school districts to establish minimal competencies and to provide added direction, guidance and support to those districts that had already adopted them. In order to construct the consensus model, the researcher interviewed personnel from twelve school districts throughout the state of California concerning how their minimal competency program had been established. The twelve school districts had been recommended to the researcher by knowledgeable people working in the field of minimal competencies. After the writer contacted and made arrangements with each school district,

the actual interview was conducted. Each interview session was tape recorded in its entirety. After the recorded interview sessions were transcribed into written notes, the researcher analyzed and then classified responses from all districts. Because each interviewee had been asked the same questions, it was possible to make a summary of the responses. The researcher then listed what the consensus had been in each category. From the results of the findings, the writer was able to construct a consensus model which any school district might be able to use as a guide for implementing its own competency testing program. It should be noted that the model presents a consensus model and may be used as a framework for school districts to develop their own competency program.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT

Part One: The Selection of Committee Personnel

1. The committee to select minimal competencies was composed of how many members? _____ (exact number)

2. Were the following groups represented on the committee? (If so, please list the exact number of individuals from each group making up the committee.)

   (a) district office administrators (b) building administrators
   (c) teachers (d) students (e) parents (f) board members
   (g) other--please specify

3. Which one of these individuals chose the committee members?

   (a) superintendent (b) assistant superintendent (c) board members
   (d) building principal (e) other--please specify

4. How was the chairman of the committee selected?

   (a) appointed by the superintendent (b) appointed by the board
   (c) volunteered (d) chosen by peers (d) other--please specify

5. Were committee members divided into subcommittees? If so, what were the specific duties of each subcommittee?

   (a) select competencies for individual grades (b) select competencies for individual subjects (c) other--please specify

6. How often did the main committee meet?

   (a) weekly (b) semiweekly (c) monthly (d) semimonthly
   (e) other--please specify

7. If there were subcommittees, how often did they meet?

   (a) weekly (b) semiweekly (c) monthly (d) semimonthly
   (e) other--please specify

8. How long did each meeting usually last?

   (a) 30 minutes-one hour (b) one hour-two hours (c) two hours-three hours (d) over three hours

9. In your opinion, how long should each meeting last in order to be most productive?

   (a) 30 minutes-one hour (b) one hour-two hours (c) two hours-three hours (d) over three hours

10. When were the meetings usually held?

    (a) morning--before school hours (b) during the lunch hour
    (c) afternoon--after school hours (d) evening hours (e) other

11. In your opinion, when should each meeting take place in order to ensure the most productivity?

    (a) morning--before school hours (b) during the lunch hour
    (c) afternoon--after school hours (d) evening hours (e) other

12. How much time elapsed from the time the committee first met until minimal competencies were finally recommended to the board?

    (a) six months (b) one year (c) eighteen months (d) two years
    (e) three years (f) other--please specify

13. What kinds of problems were encountered during committee meetings?

    (a) domination of the committee by one individual (b) domination of the committee by a specific group of individuals (c) weak leadership (d) domination of the committee by the chairman (e) other--please specify

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Part Two: The Selection of Minimal Competencies

1. In order to graduate, 12th grade students have to pass competencies in which subjects?

   (a) reading (b) writing (c) computation (d) science (e) history
   (f) government (g) other--please specify

2. If competencies have been selected in reading, at which grade level is a 12th grade student expected to read before graduating from school?

   (a) 12th grade (b) 11th grade (c) 10th grade (d) 9th grade
   (e) other--please specify

   What was the rationale for selecting this particular grade level?

   (a) majority of committee agreed (b) teacher recommendations
   (c) principal recommendations (d) other--please specify

3. If competencies have been selected in writing, at which grade level is a student expected to exhibit writing skills?

   (a) 12th grade (b) 11th grade (c) 10th grade (d) 9th grade
   (e) other--please specify

   What was the rationale for selecting this particular grade level?

   (a) majority of committee agreed (b) teacher recommendations
   (c) principal recommendations (d) other--please specify

4, If competencies have been selected in computation, at which grade level is a 12th grade student expected to compute?

   (a) 12th grade (b) 11th grade (c) 10th grade (d) 9th grade
   (e) other--please specify

   What was the rationale for selecting this particular grade level?

   (a) majority of committee agreed (b) teacher recommendations
   (c) principal recommendations (d) other--please specify

5. If competencies have been selected in science, at which grade level is a 12th grade student expected to comprehend scientific theory?

   (a) 12th grade (b) 11th grade (c) 10th grade (d) 9th grade
   (e) other--please specify

   What was the rationale for selecting this particular grade level?

   (a) majority of committee agreed (b) teacher recommendations
   (c) principal recommendations (d) other--please specify

6. If competencies have been selected in history, what periods of history is the 12th grade student expected to master?

   (a) ancient history (b) American history (c) European history
   (d) Asiatic history (e) other--please specify

   What was the rationale for selecting this particular period of history?

   (a) majority of committee agreed (b) teacher recommendations
   (c) principal recommendations (d) other--please specify

7. If competencies have been selected in government, which documents is the 12th grade student expected to master?

   (a) constitution (b) Bill of Rights only (c) how bills become laws
   (d) other--please specify

What was the rationale for selecting these particular competencies?

(a) majority of committee agreed (b) teacher recommendations (c) principal recommendations (d) other--please specify

8. Below the 12th grade, are there checkpoints in the student's career where he/she must demonstrate certain competencies in order to go on to the next grade?

   (a) yes (b) no

9. If there are certain checkpoints in the student's career where he/she must pass certain competencies in order to go on to the next grade, where are they?

   (a) at the end of each grade (b) at the end of each semester within each grade (c) upon completion of elementary school (6th grade) (d) upon completion of junior high school (8th-9th grade) (e) other--please specify

10. At these specific grade levels, what competencies are you testing for?

    (a) reading (b) writing (c) computation (d) science (e) history (f) government (g) all or some of the above (h) other--please specify

11. What is done with students who have recently transferred into the school district and have not taken the required competencies?

    (a) they must take competency tests they have missed (b) they must take a test especially constructed for transfer students (c) they are excluded from taking any tests (d) other

Note to Committee: Rather than taking up the interviewees' time with detailed questions about specific competencies in each grade, the researcher will collect relevant information concerning these required competencies from various school sources. The competencies will then be classified by the researcher at a later time.

Part Three: The Selection of Measurement Instruments
(If this information can be gathered from school records, these questions will not need to be asked.)

1. If competencies are required in the 12th grade, what instruments will be used to measure them in:

   a. reading_____
   b. writing_____
   c. math_____
   d. other_____

e. other_____
f. other_____

What was the rationale for selecting the specific measurement instrument in each subject?

(a) it could be easily scored (b) recommended by the district psychologist (c) recommended by the district office (d) recommended by teacher (e) other--please specify

2. If competencies are required in the 11th grade, what instruments will be used to measure them in:

a. reading_____
b. writing_____
c. math_____
d. other_____
e. other_____
f. other_____

What was the rationale for selecting the specific measurement instrument?

3. If competencies are required in the 10th grade, what instruments will be used to measure them in:

a. reading_____
b. writing_____
c. math_____
d. other_____
e. other_____
f. other_____

What was the rationale for selecting the specific measurement instrument?

4. If competencies are required in the 9th grade, what instruments will be used to measure them in:

a. reading_____
b. writing_____
c. math_____
d. other_____
e. other_____
f. other_____

What was the rationale for selecting the specific measurement instrument?

5. If competencies are required in the 8th grade, what instruments will be used to measure them in:

a. reading_____

b. writing_____
c. math_____
d. other_____
e. other_____

What was the rationale for selecting the specific measurement instrument?

6. If competencies are required in the 7th grade, what instruments will be used to measure them in:

a. reading_____
b. writing_____
c. math_____
d. other_____
e. other_____

What was the rationale for selecting the specific measurement instrument?

7. If competencies are required in the 6th grade, what instrument will be used to measure them in:

a. reading_____
b. writing_____
c. math_____
d. other_____

What was the rationale for selecting the specific measurement instrument in each subject?

(a) easily scored (b) recommended by the district psychologist (c) recommended by the district office administrator (d) recommended by teachers (e) other--please specify

8. If competencies are required in the 5th grade, what instrument will be used to measure them in:

a. reading_____
b. writing_____
c. math_____
d. other_____

What was the rationale for selecting the specific measurement instrument in each subject?

(a) easily scored (b) recommended by the district psychologist (c) recommended by the district office administrator (d) recommended by teachers (e) other--please specify.

9. If competencies are required in the 4th grade, what instrument will be used to measure them in:

   a. reading_____
   b. writing_____
   c. math_____
   d. other_____

   What was the rationale for selecting the specific measurement instrument in each subject?

   (a) easily scored (b) recommended by the district psychologist (c) recommended by the district office administrator (d) recommended by teachers (e) other--please specify

10. If competencies are required in the 3rd grade, what instrument will be used to measure them in:

    a. reading_____
    b. writing_____
    c. math_____
    d. other_____

    What was the rationale for selecting the specific measurement instrument in each subject?

    (a) easily scored (b) recommended by the district psychologist (c) recommended by the district office administrator (d) recommended by teachers (e) other--please specify

11. If competencies are required in the 2nd grade, what instrument will be used to measure them in:

    a. reading_____
    b. writing_____
    c. math_____
    d. other_____

    What was the rationale for selecting the specific measurement instrument in each subject?

    (a) easily scored (b) recommended by the district psychologist (c) recommended by the district office administrator (d) recommended by teachers (e) other--please specify

12. If competencies are required in the 1st grade, what instrument will be used to measure them in:

    a. reading_____
    b. writing_____
    c. math_____
    d. other_____

What was the rationale for selecting the specific measurement instrument in each subject?

(a) easily scored (b) recommended by the district psychologist (c) recommended by the district office administrator (d) recommended by teachers (e) other--please specify

Part Four: Implementing the Competencies

1. How were the teachers informed about minimal competencies?

(a) during district workshops (b) during individual school workshops (c) individual conferences with the building principal (d) memos from the district office (e) other--specify

2. If district workshops were held, how often were they held?

(a) weekly (b) semiweekly (c) monthly (d) other--specify

3. If individual school workshops were held, how often were they held?

(a) weekly (b) semiweekly (c) monthly (d) other--specify

4. If district workshops were held, who presided over them?

(a) superintendent (b) assistant superintendent (c) a teacher (d) the principal (e) other--please specify

5. If workshops were given, what time of the day did they take place?

(a) morning--before school hours (b) during the lunch period (c) afternoon--after school hours (d) during the evening (e) other--please specify

6. If workshops were given, how many were there altogether during the school year?

(a) one (b) two (c) three (d) four (e) other--specify

7. If workshops were given, did they take place:

(a) at the beginning of the year only (b) at the beginning and middle of the year only (c) at the beginning and end of the year only (d) at the beginning, middle and end of the year (e) other--please specify

8. If workshops were given, teachers attended:

(a) on their own time after school hours (b) during school hours and a substitute was provided for the students (c) other--please specify

9. If workshops were given, what problems were encountered during the meetings?

   (a) domination of the workshops by one individual (b) domination of the workshops by a specific group of teachers (c) dissatisfaction of teachers with identified competencies (d) other--specify

10. When were minimal competency tests to be taken by students?

    (a) middle of the year (b) end of the year (c) middle and end of the year (d) other--please specify

11. How were the students informed of the minimal competency requirements?

    (a) by individual teachers (b) by the principal (c) by the counselors (d) through written materials (e) other--specify

12. What extra materials were needed to implement competencies?

    (a) new textbooks (b) new workbooks (c) special charts and records (d) special written materials (e) other--please specify

13. What safeguards were proposed to insure the integrity of the tests?

    (a) principal checked the curriculum to see no questions from the curriculum were in the test (b) teachers were cautioned by the principal not to teach to the test (c) tests were not shown to teachers before they were given to the students (d) other--please specify

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Part Five: Communication Procedures

1. How were parents informed of the new minimal competency requirements?

   (a) large formal meetings (b) small informal meetings (c) by letter (d) other--please specify

2. If meetings were held to inform parents, when did they take place?

   (a) afternoon--after school hours (b) during the evening (c) in morning hours (d) other--specify

3. If meetings were held to inform parents, how many took place?

   (a) one (b) two (c) three (d) four (e) other

4. If meetings were held to inform parents, did they include:

   (a) all parents from all grades (b) parents from only one grade at a time (c) other--please specify

5. How were individual parents informed that their child was being retained or not graduating from school?

   (a) by telephone (b) by letter (c) by individual conference (d) other--specify

6. If a student was retained in the same class or prevented from graduating from school, when was the student and his/her parents notified?

   (a) middle of the year (b) end of the year (c) other

7. How many times could the student take the minimal competency exams before being informed that he/she was being retained?

   (a) once (b) twice (c) three times (d) four times (e) other

8. Who else in the community, besides parents were informed of the new minimal competency requirements?

   (a) community service clubs (b) church clubs (c) local newspaper (d) other--please specify

9. How were individual parents informed of the child's progress during the year?

   (a) letter (b) phone call (c) individual conference (d) parents not informed unless failing (e) other

10. What other public relations procedures were implemented in order to inform the community of the new minimal competencies?

    (a) brochures sent out (b) local radio station (c) other

Part Six: Student Remediation Procedures
(Exceptional Children and Multicultural Children)

1. What kinds of remediation were provided to students who did not meet the required competencies?

   (a) special help within the regular classroom (b) special help outside the regular classroom during school hours (c) special help outside the classroom after school hours (d) special help within a group of students outside the classroom (e) special help on an individual basis outside the classroom (f) other--please specify

2. If special help was provided to the student outside the classroom, how much of the school day was taken up with this help?

   (a) 30 minutes (b) one hour (c) two hours (d) other--specify

3. What kind of personnel were assigned to help the students who needed remediation?

   (a) counselor (b) classroom teacher (c) teacher aide (d) special education teacher (e) part-time teacher (f) other--please specify

4. How often was the student given special help?

   (a) daily (b) semiweekly (c) monthly (d) weekly (e) other--specify

5. How was the money provided to pay for the special teacher?

   (a) regular school budget (b) special funds (c) parent-club funds (d) other--please specify

6. How often was a student allowed to take a competency test before it was determined that he could not take it again?

   (a) once (b) twice (c) three times (d) four times (e) other

7. If the student did not receive a graduation diploma, what would he receive in its place?

   (a) certificate of attendance (b) no certificate (c) other--please specify

8. How are children who have been diagnosed as learning disabled dealt with?

   (a) they take the same tests as other students but are graded on a different basis (b) they take a different type of test, constructed by a special education teacher (c) they are excluded from taking minimal competency tests altogether (d) other

9. How are children who have been diagnosed as mentally retarded dealt with?

   (a) they take the same test as the other students but are graded on a different basis (b) they take a different type of test, constructed by a special education teacher (c) they are excluded from taking the test altogether (d) other

10. How are bilingual children dealt with?

    (a) they take the same tests as other students but the tests are written in their native language (b) they take a different type of test, constructed by a bilingual teacher (c) they are excluded from taking the test (d) they take the same test as other students--and in English (e) other--please specify

11. How are visually handicapped children dealt with?

    (a) they take the same tests as other students but the tests are in braille (b) the words in the test are enlarged (c) they take a different type of test, constructed by a specialist in the field of visually handicapped (d) they are excluded from taking the test (e) other

12. How are children who have been diagnosed as orthopedically handicapped (not able to write) dealt with?

    (a) they take the same tests as other students but answer the questions orally (b) they take a different type of test (c) they are excluded from taking the test (d) other--please specify

13. How are children who have been diagnosed as hard of hearing or deaf dealt with?

    (a) they take the same tests as other students (b) they take a different type of test, constructed by a specialist in working with deaf children (c) they are excluded from taking the test (d) other--please specify

APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC
BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND FIELD SERVICES
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION Stockton, California Founded 1851
95211

John W. Nicoll
Superintendent of Schools
Newport-Mesa Unified School District
P.O. Box 1368
Newport Beach, California 92663

April 28, 1978

Dear Dr. Nicoll:

With the advent of the Hart Bill and its demands for implementing minimal competencies in the schools, it has become apparent that many school districts will be looking for guidance and structure in responding to these demands.

Your district has been referred to me by officers in the California Department of Education (Program Evaluation and Research), exectutive officers in the California Association of School Administrators and consultants on the education committee of the California State Assembly as having an already outstanding minimal-competency program.

With your permission, I would like to visit your school district and interview you or the individual in charge of the program in order to learn how your district selects, measures and implements minimal competencies.

From the interview with you and other districts, a model will be developed to illustrate a step-by-step process which any school district may follow or refer to when establishing its own minimal competencies.

Your input in this matter will assist in building a model that could be of great significance to districts throughout the state and to districts in other states that have not yet begun work in the minimal-competency area.

The interview should take approximately one hour. Within the next week, I plan to call your office to arrange for an appointment. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Ralph L. Blumenthal

UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC

BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND FIELD SERVICES

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION Stockton, California Founded 1851

95211

Ms. Hoffman
Curriculum Coordinator
Newport-Mesa Unified School District
P.O. Box 1368
Newport Beach, California 92663

May 16, 1978

Dear Ms. Hoffman:

This will confirm my arrangement to meet with you at 1:00 P.M. on Tuesday, May 23 at your office.

As I mentioned on the telephone, from the interview with you and other referred districts, a model will be developed to illustrate a step-by-step process which any school may follow or allude to when establishing its own minimal competencies.

The model will consist of five main categories: (1) selection of committee personnel; (2) selection of specific competencies; (3) measurement of competencies; (4) implementation of competencies; and (5) remediation procedures. I will be especially interested in the rational used to select and measure the competencies.

Your input in this matter will greatly assist in building this model that could be of great significance to districts throughout the state and to districts in other states that have not yet begun work in the minimal-competency area.

I certainly appreciate you taking time off from your schedule, especially at this busy time of the year. The interview should not take longer than an hour. I shall be looking forward to meeting you on May 23.

Sincerely,

Ralph L. Blumenthal

UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC
BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND FIELD SERVICES
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION Stockton, California Founded 1851
95211

Nola Hoffman
Curriculum Coordinator
Newport-Mesa Unified School District
P.O. Box 1368
Newport Beach, California 92663

Dear Ms. Hoffman:

I would like to thank you for giving up your busy afternoon to talk to me about your district's minimal competency program.

Due to your willing and helpful cooperation, I was able to learn a great deal about how the Newport-Mesa School District is dealing with the problems of establishing effective competencies for its high school students.

Now that all interviews have been completed, a model will be developed based on all the accumulated data. The final report will probably be finished at the end of summer. I will be happy to send you a copy.

Thank you again, so much, for all your time and your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Ralph L. Blumenthal